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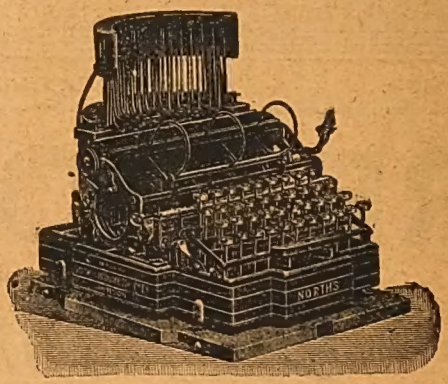

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ACROSS THE BORDER

A Tale of the Present War.

"MARY!"

The voice came from the tall grass which clad the sloping sides of one of two hills laying mid-way between Zeerust and the Bechuanaland frontier.

The one addressed was a beautiful girl of about twenty, clad in the becoming, and useful, dress—half-riding-habit, half-walking costume—affected by most of the women whose fate it is to live in semi-civilised countries.

As the well-known voice fell upon her ears she turned pale, and, after casting one searching glance upon the level stretch of veld at her feet, moved in the direction from which it had come, saying:

"Oh, Dick, why have you ventured here again. You know Stephanus Reicht has sworn to have you shot as a spy if he catches you in his district again."

The immediate answer was a hand stretched forth to draw her into the grass, and the next moment Lieutenant Richard Oram, of Colonel Baden-Powell's Irregular Horse had his sweetheart in his arms.

But only for a moment, it had not needed Mary Trevor's words to tell Oram of his danger and, as he released her, he said:

"I know all about Mr. Reicht, dear, more perhaps than he would like. It is partially to put you on your guard against him that I have crossed the border, and have ridden into hostile territory."

"Hostile territory, Dick? Surely war has not been declared?" asked the girl anxiously.

"To all intents and purposes it has. Kruger has gone dotty in his old age, and has ordered all British troops to be moved from the Transvaal borders," was the reply which brought forth from the young lady a laugh:

"What impertinence! Even the Kaffirs seem to have a truer knowledge of England's greatness than the Boers."

"But it is true nevertheless, and I hope your father will see the wisdom of crossing to Mafeking at once," returned Oram, "but it was not that which brought me here. Our Kaffir spies tell me that Reicht has been collecting the scum of the black population on either side of the border. The spies have talked with them, and they say they are hired to attack the outlying British farms when war commences. Now Kruger dare not do such a thing as that, for, if we retaliated by letting loose the Zulus, Swazis, and Basutos upon them, there would not be a Boer left in the country in a month. No, Reicht is doing it on his own responsibility. He has for some time had a suspicion that your father is something else besides a mere farmer, and perhaps has jumped at the truth."

"You don't think he knows anything about the mine?" asked Mary, turning pale to her very lips.

"That is just what I do think. If he brought a force of Boers against you he would have to share whatever he found with them, if he did not have to give it all up to his government, whilst he can employ the Kaffirs to kill you, then seize the gold for himself."

Ere the girl could reply a Cape Boy who had been on the look-out on the top of the hill rushed towards them crying:

"Four Boers coming, gallop, quick, from Zeerust, Missie."

"Warn the Baas, Tchina," she cried, addressing the Kaffir. Then turning to her lover she added hastily: "Go at once, Dick. After what you have told me I am certain my father will not think of remaining here longer than to-night. At the latest you may look for us in Mafeking to-morrow evening."

"I will not be easy until you are safely there. Good bye, darling, Heaven shield you," cried the young man, pressing her to his heart ere disappearing amongst the tall grass which obtains round Zeerust to make his way towards where he had left his horse fastened to the gnarled roots of a thorny bush.

The girl stood where her lover had left her until she saw him in the distance galloping over the veld, then assured of his safety, she made her way down the hill towards a house built on a bluff which jutted into a narrow stream flowing between the two hills before mentioned.

The house was called a farm, and registered in the Field-Cornet's books as a farm. In fact the thousand acres, which Mr. Trevor had bought twelve months before, fed some three hundred head of cattle, but the grass was too tall and rank for profitable cattle-raising, and the house with its stone walls and corrugated iron roof, seemed rather built as a fort in case of need than for comfort.

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And such was the case, for the house was literally built on gold.

Some eighteen months previous by Mr. Trevor and his four sons had left Mafeking prospecting for gold. To his experienced eye the bluff on which he had afterwards built his house, showed signs of gold.

A few experimental borings showed him his supposition was correct as far as the bluff itself went, although the hills and surrounding country did not seem to have a grain of gold in them. Most probably the gold-bearing reef had been detached centuries before from the rich Malamani Goldfields by a volcanic eruption.

To make his find known was to have it wrested from him by the grasping, unscrupulous Boers. He therefore gave out that he was a settler from Cape Colony, and, after some bit of higgling, bought the two hills and the surrounding land for farming purposes. The wily Boer who sold it chuckling at the folly of the "fool Englander," who gave away good money for bad land.

His first care had been to build a house he could defend in case of need, then he trekked with his whole household from Mafeking, to take possession of his new purchase.

Mr. Trevor had taken every precaution to conceal the existence of his great find. Yet, somehow, at the commencement of our story it came to be whispered about that the Englander, Trevor, was working an illicit mine. However, the reports did not trouble him greatly. The mine had proved rich beyond his most sanguine dreams, and he was quite ready to move into British territory, and from thence make his find known at any moment.

Having watched Lieutenant Oram until he was nearly out of sight, Mary hastened from the hill to the farm buildings.

As she entered the barn she found her father arranging the last bags of mealies over the windlass, and washing pans, which were their sole appliances for obtaining the gold, whilst nearly half the barn was occupied with earth from the mine, so covered with hay as to be completely hidden from view.

Assured of the mine's safety, Mary hastened into the house; reappearing at the door just as four Boers, armed with rifles, rode into the open space between the house and the barn.

"Here, take a drink of this," he added, handing his flask to the Kaffir.

"Come, father, dinner is ready," she cried, pretending not to see the clumsy salute with which the foremost Boer greeted her.

"Hullo, Reicht, just in time to have something to eat with us," cried Trevor, hospitably. "Come in, come in."

Nothing loth, the Boers dismounted, and the four brothers joining them at that moment, they all entered the house together.

Reicht was a tall, evil-looking fellow, with heavy features, blood-shot eyes, full thick nose, and sensual lips—in fact, a typical Boer.

At the meal which followed he was more than once in danger of finding himself thrown neck and crop from the house by one or the other of Mary's stout brothers, for the coarse fulsome compliments he paid her, but the laws of hospitality prevailed, and the meal passed off without unpleasantnesses except so far as the Boers' manners are always unpleasant, closely resembling that of the animal whose name but for one letter is similar to his own.

"Are you travelling further, or is your visit to myself?" asked Trevor, when the meal was finished.

"My business is with you, friend," said Reicht as he drew an official-looking paper from his pocket. "You have not taken out naturalization papers, but that doesn't matter, we're going to drive you Britishers into the sea, and you must help to do it. I have here the order to commandeer you, and your sons; but some must be left to look after your farm, I, Field-Cornet, will be content with three of them."

Reicht had spoken with the air of one having authority, and he flushed angrily when Mary, her father, and brothers, received his proposition with roars of laughter.

"Surely you are not serious, Herr Reicht?" asked Trevor. "Why, man, if your little one horse country tries conclusions with Britain, you'll be just giving your country to us."

"You beastly English pigs will never do it. You will run as you did at Majuba, and as for your silly old Queen—" began Reicht.

"Silence, you hound! You may say what you like about our country, for that I know is ignorance. But if you dare to say a word against our beloved Queen, I'll whip you from here to Zeerust." thundered Trevor, red with anger, as he laid a heavy hand on Reicht's shoulder.

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Pale as death went the valiant Boer, and pale as death went his gallant companions.

"Don't hit me. Don't hit me," he whined too terrified to do more than look appealingly at his escort, but they were gazing in terror at Trevor's stalwart sons who had placed themselves between their guests and their rifles.

"Hit you, you coward? I have a good mind to thrash you as you deserve for daring to come here on such a fool's errand. Off with you, and if I catch you within five miles of my farm again, you will think a cyclone has struck you," cried Trevor, and the Boers glad to escape so easily mounted their horses and fled.

"Look out you pig Englander, I'll be even with you for this," shouted Reicht, when at a safe distance from the Briton, checking his horse for the moment and shaking his fist at the laughing Englishmen.

"When you wish, Herr Reicht, I will always be glad to see you in any guise but that of a friend," shouted back the miner. "Now, lads, we must get out the gold and make tracks for Mafeking, that brute means mischief," he added, turning to his sons.

Unfortunately for the Trevors' rich "pocket of gold," lying deep in the quartz, had delayed them longer than they expected, and, although they had got it all to the surface, it was not ready for transportation.

But first, as the Trevors had no idea of making the Boers a present of their household furniture, they loaded it on to a big ox-waggon, and some two hours before dark sent it off in charge of the youngest son and the two least trustworthy Cape boys. Old Tchina and another Cape boy went with the waggon to the frontier, after which they were ordered to return and fire the shed, Trevor hoping that, seeing the place destroyed, the Boers would not take the trouble to search it very closely, and would thus miss the mine which he hoped to work, or to dispose of after the war, which seemed inevitable, was over.

As we have said, the Trevors' mining venture had been more than usually successful. Three months before, the old man had taken some ten thousand ounces of gold done up in various sacks and bags, to a trusted agent in Capetown, five thousand ounces had gone with the waggon, hidden away amongst their household effects, but there was still nearly thirty thousand ounces to be carried away, in itself a considerable fortune.

This they placed into strong canvas bags and filled up with mealies, to disguise what they contained, ere being flung over the backs of pack-horses.

The last bag had been placed in position, the pack-horses strung together, and Mary Trevor was looking with a saddened heart at the place in which she had spent so many happy months, when an ejaculation of alarm burst from her lips as Tchina, wounded, bleeding, and breathless, approached them.

"Good Heavens, Tchina! What has happened? Where is Master Charles?" asked Trevor, anxiously, as the old Kaffir hastened towards him.

"Waggon all right over border. Massa Charlie all right, too. Bad black men, creeping like snakes through the grass. Panja dead! Tchina soon join him," replied the faithful old fellow in a weak voice.

"To horse, lads, to horse. We have not a moment to lose. Throw the gold off that horse and mount him, Tchina. Here take a drink of this," he added, extending his flask to the Kaffir who seemed about to fall.

"Too late, Baas, too late," declared the Kaffir. "Black rascals all round farm, no escape, not none."

Even as the faithful Cape boy spoke a shot rang out from the grass and a bullet flattened itself on the wall behind the old miner.

"That's a Boer rifle, I'll swear," ejaculated Trevor angrily. "Into the house, boys, we must give the villains a drubbing, it will never do to start through that grass until we have driven them off."

"Come back, Mary, where are you going?" he asked the next moment as his daughter turned her horse's head towards the open.

"One can get past them, perhaps, where more would fail. I am going for assistance," returned the brave girl. "Good-bye, father, Heaven preserve you," she added, as her horse sprang forward and she was lost to sight in a clump of trees to the east of the farm.

For a moment the miner seemed almost inclined to dash after his daughter, but a moment's reflection showed him that she had chosen a course no more dangerous than his own, and probably less so.

Another bullet which sent his hat flying yards warned him that his position was too exposed, and he rejoined his sons and the remaining three Kaffirs, who, having driven the horses into a large paddock, protected by the house on one side, and by the face of the bluff on the other three, offered them freedom from capture, were already putting the house into a state of defence, by closing the loop-holed shutters, and strengthening them with bags of mealies.

Barely had Mr. Trevor and his three sons, Tom, Harry and Claude and three Kaffirs, one of whom, Tchina, was badly wounded, got ready, then, with blood-curdling yells, some two hundred dark figures dashed from out the long grass and rushed towards the house.

"Don't throw a shot away. Fire!" cried Trevor.

In response the four Lee-Metfords of the white men, and the Sniders of the Kaffirs, flashed fire in the rapidly darkening air, each bullet finding its mark in the closely packed ranks of their foes, who, maddened by the drink Reicht had given them, surged to the very walls of the house, ere, unable to stand the pitiless hail of lead which struck them down at every moment, they turned and fled to the cover of the long grass, from whence the defenders could hear a voice which they recognised as Reicht's, urging them to charge again.

"Do you hear that black-hearted villain. Let us pour a volley into the grass, perhaps a bullet may reach his foul carcase," whispered Trevor to his sons.

No sooner said than done and the four Lee-Metfords all speaking at once, sent their nickel-coated missiles hurtling through the grass, bringing forth a yell of pain which told that they had not fired in vain, although the sufferer was evidently not the man they wanted to kill, but a native.

There is little or no twilight in the Transvaal, and night came upon them like a dark curtain, shutting out the view around, and rendering the task of the defenders trebly hard.

But ere the last rays of the grey light struck the earth, Reicht's band of Kaffirs sprung forward, and, for five minutes, it seemed as though they would break down the door, which alone kept them from their prey, by sheer weight of numbers. Just as darkness finally settled on the scene, the Britons drove them off once more, but not until one of the Cape boys lay dead on the floor with an assegai, which had been hurled through the loop-hole from which he was firing, quivering in his chest, and Claude Trevor had been wounded by a spent bullet in the fleshy part of his arm.

Slowly the hours of darkness dragged their weary

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lengths away. Death, in its most unnerving form, was constantly threatening them, for in the darkness a native would creep up to the very loop-holes, and the first thing that was known of his presence would be his broad-bladed assegai hurtling into the room.

More than one attempt had been made to burn down the door, but it had been covered with sheet tin and would not burn, and as one of the windows projected so as to cover it, the attackers soon found that the slightest spark only led to a quick report, and certain death, and accordingly it was abandoned.

About one o'clock the moon rose, and with a sigh of relief the defenders saw by her pale beams a score or so of dark bodies which littered the front of the house.

One final rush, and the natives, changing their tactics, kept well under cover, and maintained a constant fusillade upon the house to which the little garrison could make but a faint reply, for their ammunition was already failing them, and, unless help came, the end could not be postponed long.

Just as the first beams of the welcome sun tinged the top of the two hills between which the farmhouse was situated, a cry of:

"The English soldiers! Look out! The soldiers are coming! Run! run!" broke from the ranks of the attackers and the swaying of the tall grass told that they were fleeing towards the East, the direction opposite that from which the rescue party from Mafeking would naturally come.

"Hurrah, lads, we are saved!" cried the old miner, throwing down the mealie bags which blocked the door. "Give them a cheer, boys. It will show Mary, bless her, if she is with them, that her old dad is safe. Hip, hip, hurrah!" he added, rushing out, waving his hat.

But no answering British cheer responded. Instead, a wild, fierce, triumphant yell from their blood-thirsty foes told them that they had been the dupe of a cunning stratagem to draw them from the shelter of the house.

The disappointment was crushing. But not for a moment did the little band of heroes hesitate. It was too late to retreat, and, standing back to back, they faced the oncoming mass of savages, undaunted to the last.

In the meantime Mary Trevor having cleared the wood into which we saw her disappear, found herself in a narrow belt of tall, semi-tropical grass, beyond which lay a wide expanse of short "sweet veld" or "sugar-bush" grass.

So far neither shout, nor shot had followed her, to show that her escape had been noticed, and she was about to congratulate herself on being out of danger, when, from the grass at her feet, a hideous savage, in all the bravery of feathers and furs, sprang up, and seized her horse's bridle.

A home-bred girl might well have lost her nerve, and her life, at the same time. Mary Trevor did neither. Ready for any emergency, she carried in her hand an elegant little pearl-handled revolver, a present from her father. Without a moment's hesitation she aimed at the brawny savage, and fired.

The tiny bullet struck him squarely in the forehead, and, almost without a moan, the raised spear fell from his hands, and he dropped back amongst the long grass dead.

A shudder shook the brave girl from head to foot, and for the moment, she reeled in her saddle, but the next, as an assegai clipped one of the feathers from her hat, in its flight over her head, telling her that other foes were about, she shook her rein, and her well-trained steed darted forward, as a second burly black charged forward to avenge his comrade's death.

Once more the little pistol spoke, and the random shot, for it was little more, struck the shaft of the savage's assegai, cracking it in halves, and undoubtedly saving her life, for a Kaffir seldom misses an easy shot twice.

On she dashed, fearing to meet fresh foes at every stride her charger made, until, at last, the belt of tall grass was cleared, and she was speeding over the open veld.

Turning to the North, and then to the West, she encircled the farm, and, eager to make as much of the little daylight left as possible, urged her horse on to its utmost, the heavy firing from the farm telling her how great the danger was which threatened her father and brothers.

Presently, just as the sun sank to rest, on topping a long ridge running East and West, she came to an abrupt halt, and, for the first time, her brave heart failed her.

Riding slowly over the veld in the direction of Mafeking, from whence alone help could come, was a large force of, as far as she could estimate, quite a thousand Boers.

Had they been European soldiers, although they were marching against her own countrymen, she would have ridden boldly up to them, and begged them to have sent assistance to save white men from savages, but she knew the Boer character too well to hope anything from them. On the contrary, well she knew that he would be met with insult and detentions, if not death.

The Red Indian of the boundless Western

The tiny bullet struck him squarely in the forehead, and the raised spear fell from his hands.

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prairies may have mercy on a foe, if that foe is a woman, but a Boer never.

There was no help for it. She must make a long detour, and get ahead of the commando. Perhaps now, not only the saf ty of her own people, but the safety of the entire garri-on at Mafeking depended upon h r reaching that place before them.

With an impatient sigh she turned her horse's head once more in a northerly direction, and recommenced her ride at an easy hand-gallop.

For nearly an hour she pressed onwards in a darkness so thick that she was unable to see a yard before her horse's head. More than once she narrowly escaped being precipitated into a donga, or over some of the many ant-hills which dotted the plains.

At last, fearing lest she should ride headlong into a Boer encampment, she reluctantly halted. Dismounting, she knee-haltered her horse, and flung herself on the ground to snatch, if possible, a few minutes' sleep.

But every time she closed her eyes the contracted face of the negro she had killed rose before her, and she sprang to her feet trembling in every limb, and praying for light.

At last the moon rose, and she looked around her in dismay. By travelling in the inky darkness she had broken one of the ru'es of veld-life, except when there is a well defined road, and suffered for it accordingly. She was on a wide, ant-hill dotted plain, without a single landmark to guide her.

A rattling of hoofs told her that the Boers were in swift pursuit.

However, unless she had passed over it in the dark, she knew that, by travelling with her back to the moon, she must strike the railroad, which, starting from Cape Town, is destined to traverse Africa to Cairo, and by following that would be certain to reach Mafeking. How she prayed that she might be in time to put Colonel Baden-Powell on his guard.

Her conclusions were correct. About an hour later she struck the railway and was cantering steadily southwards when she stumbled into the midst of an encampment of about thirty Boers, who were evidently on the look-out for a train going, or coming, to Mafeking.

To retreat was impossible, to obey the guttural shouts of the Boers and halt meant the death of her father and brothers, and probably the destruction of the defenders of Mafeking, so bending over her horse's withers she struck him smartly with her riding whip and bounded forward.

A few shots were fired after her, then a rattling of hoofs told her that the Boers were in swift pursuit.

On they came, every moment drawing nearer and nearer, for Mary's pony was small and weighted with the gold she was carrying.

Presently, when the Boers were barely twenty yards behind her, through a cutting between some low hills came a dark fire-belching, unshapely monster, which caused her horse to sw rve aside, almost unseating her.

As it did so the report of a single rifle rung out in the night air and the foremost Boer tumbled from his saddle. The rifle was followed by a "zip-zip-zip" once heard never forgotten, a constant stream of flame seemed to pour from the front of the dark mass, and the remorseless fire of a maxim struck the remaining Boers, sweeping them down as though they had been blasted by supernatural agency.

Then she knew that it was one of the armoured trains which had saved her, and rode fearlessly up to an opening near the engine, in the cent e of the train from which a man alighted, who, with a cry of joy, she recognised as Lieutenant Oram.

"M ry, you here? Where are your father and brothers?" he crie l, hastening to her side.

He looked very grave as Mary Trevor told him all that had occurred. When she had finished he said:

"Ride back to Mafeking, darling, and give notice of the Boer advance. I ha e a dozen troopers behind those hills, and will start off for the farm at once. Heaven grant we may be in time."

"Can't I come with you, Dick?" pleaded Mary.

"Impo-sible, dear. Besides I cannot spare a trooper, and so you will be doing an actual service if you will go," replied Dick, who knew that appeals for her personal safety woul l have had no effect on the brave girl, and had invented this excuse fo sending her into the town.

As to the advance of the Boers, Colonel Baden Powell's scouts had informed him of that long ago.

One hasty kiss and D ck having seen his sweetheart speeding towards Mafeking, blew a blast on his whistle. Immediately twelve troopers, one of whom led his officer's horse, cantered through the cutting.

"Now, my lads, four Englishmen and a few Cape boys are being attacked in a farm just over the border by some Kaffirs led by a white scoundrel, whom I need

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not say is a Boer. We have been ordered not to cross the frontier, but there is no time to communicate with the Colonel. I will not ask you to disobey commands, but I am going, let who will stay behind."

As he spoke Dick swung himself on to his horse, and, without looking round, galloped eastwards, but his practised ear told him that his gallant little troop had answered his appeal to a man.

On they swept over the veld, keeping well to the North, for Dick wished to take the foe in the rear, from whence no attack could be expected. An hour's quick gallop brought them to the rear of the hills just as the sun rose above the horizon.

Little guessing how close Nemesis was on him, Stephanus Reicht was watching his mob of half-drunken blacks as they surged round Mr. Trevor and his gallant little party.

Reicht was an arrant coward at heart, and had gladly availed himself of the excuse that he did not want to be seen by the Britishers, to keep out of harm's way.

Now and again the Kaffirs seemed to be swamping the little group of determined Britons, then they would reel back, beaten and discomfited, but only to gather for another rush.

"Bother these English, how they die," muttered Reicht with involuntary admiration, as he saw his paid assassins recoil once more before their foes. "On, my brothers, on. One more charge and your assegais will drink their heart's blood," he yelled.

"But yours shall pay the penalty first," shouted a hoarse voice in his ear, and, turning, he found himself face to face with Dick Oram and his twelve stern-faced troopers.

"Mercy, mercy. I——" began the wretched man, but ere he could throw himself on his knees before his avenger, as he intended doing, the cold beams of the moon shone for a moment on Dick's sword, and the next the blade entered his cowardly heart.

"Now, lads, one volley into the black devils, then charge," he added, withdrawing his sword, and stepping contemptuously over the writhing corpse.

Twelve loud reports, ringing out as one, a stirring British cheer, and the Kaffirs, not daring to meet Dick's gallant troopers, broke and fled.

"Thank heaven you have come. Their next charge must have destroyed us. We have only one cartridge left!" cried Mr. Trevor as he pressed his rescuer's hand.

"Had we been too late you would have died like heroes," cried Dick admiringly, pointing to about forty or fifty dead Kaffirs which lay around where the little band had stood.

But although they were saved so far, all danger was not yet over. Not one of the party had escaped unwounded, although all except the eldest son were yet upon their feet, but they were bleeding from numberless wounds and would not be much good if they had to fight their way through the Boers to Mafeking.

It took the troopers, experts in wounds though they were, half-an-hour to see to the injuries the little party had sustained, then driving the pack horses before them, for Dick would not hear of the gold being abandoned to the Boers, they set off on their return journey.

Until they struck the railway they were unmolested, but as they neared the cutting where Mary had met the armoured train, they were attacked by at least two hundred Boers and were in imminent danger of being captured, when the train once more steamed on to the scene, and sent the Boers flying in all directions before the fire of its maxim.

Shortly afterwards the little party reached Mafeking in safety. The next day, when the armoured train under Lieutenant Nesbit departed on its journey to Vryburg, from which it was fated never to return, Mary and her elder brother, who had been too seriously injured to fight again, were carried by it to that town and to safety.

Reginald Wray.

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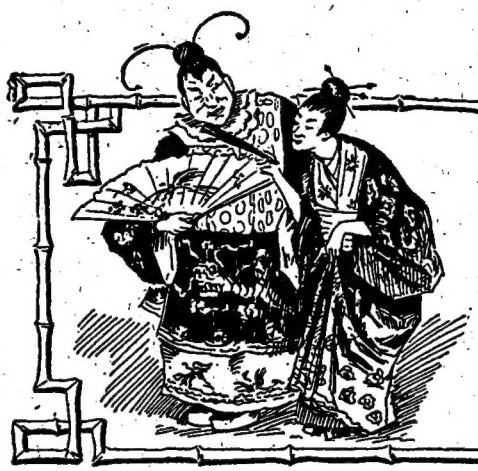

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XXI.—HE SPENDS HIS LAST NIGHT IN THE COUNTRY.

MRS. BOWSER and the cook worked over Mr. Bowser for two hours after his adventure with the bumblebees, and he spent the whole day sitting about with his head and hands in poultices. During the morning before his pains had abated, no questions were asked him, but after dinner, when his interest in life seemed to have revived a little, Mrs. Bowser said:

"I can't make out how it happened. Did you walk into a nest of bumblebees?"

"Woman, do you take me for an idiot? I saw through the whole thing in a minute. I was out here for my health. I was beginning to find the pure air and the seclusion doing me good. You wanted to go home, and played a trick on me."

"But how did I know about the bumblebees?" she protested.

"Never mind how you knew. It was a deep laid plot to bring about my death, your sixteenth attempt to assassinate me, but it failed. But for your bloodthirstiness I might have consented to return home when my weight had increased ten or fifteen pounds, but now I'll be hanged if I don't stay here till I weigh a ton!"

It was no use to argue further. The day passed slowly and quietly by, and night came. Mr. Bowser grew better natured, and as he sat at the door he melted enough to say:

"By George, but what an evening! At this hour in the city there's noise enough to rouse the dead, while here there's a soothness and stillness positively entrancing. No wonder that farmers live to be two hundred years old."

"I hope the whole night will be quiet," ventured Mrs. Bowser as she thought of Dusty Bill and the other interruptions.

"We shall sleep like tops and awake with the rising sun. I am glad to see you and the cook more reasonable about things. In a day or two all will be ship-shape, and you'll both thank me for this move."

The crickets sang, the blackbirds chattered, and the sparrows called to each other in the ivy. By and by it was bedtime, and the house became quiet.

The first interruption came from the owl of the night before. He wasn't satisfied with his previous effort, though he had done fairly well. He came to beat the record, and the sound of his voice rolled Mr. Bowser out of bed and set the women screaming.

"Shut up your noise!" he shouted as he fumbled about and struck a light. "It's nothing but that owl come back again; but, by the bones of my grandfather, I'll show him that his hooting isn't appreciated!"

The bird flew away at the sight of the light, and Mr. Bowser was standing in the open door surveying the night when a voice out of the darkness remarked:

"I see your light, old pal, and thought I'd drop in and hev a drink with you."

It was Dusty Bill again.

As Mr Bowser gazed at him in astonishment he came forward and continued:

"And perhaps you can be prevailed upon to show me that trick you practised on me last night. By George, what's the matter with your face?"

"You scoundrel!" gasped Mr. Bowser. "But what are you doing down here again tonight?"

"Haven't I been telling you? Where's the drink?"

"I'll give you drinks, you loafer, you! Out of this before I mop the earth with you!"

"But the dr——"

He was standing at the open door surveying the night.

Mr. Bowser tackled him, the women screamed, the owl hooted from a distant tree, and for five minutes there was a lively time in that end of the country. Then the tramp broke away and made off, and as the panting Mr.

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Bowser sat down on the doorstep to recover his wind Mrs. Bowser tearfully exclaimed:

"Your ear is bitten, your nose is scratched, and he's torn the shirt off your back! How can you call this a holiday? Oh, if you'd only agree to go home in the morning!"

"Never!" he shouted as he got breath enough. "I've hired this place for three months, and all the tramps in the country shan't drive me away. Go back to bed and let the crickets sing you to sleep. I'll sit about for a while and see if anything more is going to happen. If the tramp comes back, I'll kill and bury him."

Mrs. Bowser and the cook went back to their rooms, and for the next hour all was peace. Mr. Bowser was sick of the whole job and fishing for a way to throw it up and get back to town, but he couldn't see his way clearly. Right or wrong, he always stuck to his word.

He was plunged in reflection when the owl came flying round, but he managed to drive it off without raising an alarm. He had just taken his seat again when he heard the tramp of feet, and the next moment Dusty Bill and two other tramps stood before him.

The four men were fighting in a heap on the grass.

"Excuse me, old pal," said Dusty, with a scrape and a bow, "but I thought you might like to meet me intimate friends, Railway Jim and Towpath Tom. I told 'em that you had some drinks ready for us."

"I want the gang of you to clear off this place at once!" sternly replied Mr. Bowser as he heard the two women getting out of bed.

"Speak softly, my boy," said Railway Jim as he pressed forward. "We is gentlemen talking to a gentleman. There ain't no call for any hard words between us."

"And on the part of this gang of gentlemen," added Towpath Tom, as he moved up, "I'd like to ask the stranger what he is doin' in our house."

"Your house!" replied Mr. Bowser. "I've hired this house for three months, sir, and you can't get off the place any too quick to please me!"

"Gents, you see how it is," said Dusty as he turned to his companions. "This yere chap has gone and formed a trust to drive us out of our home, and the only way we can git our rights is to bust the combination."

Mr. Bowser realized that he had a fight in prospect, with odds of three to one, but he did not falter. As they moved towards him he was ready, and when Mrs. Bowser reached the door the four men were fighting in a heap on the grass.

There were screams and shouts and bad words, the tramps encouraged each other by shouting warcries, but at the end of ten minutes they gave up the fight and fled. Mr. Bowser had fairly licked the trio, but he had not come off unscathed. They had kicked and bitten and pinched him until he was a sight to see.

Mrs. Bowser was weeping and the cook wailing as he got up and shook himself to see what was missing. Without heeding them he marched into the house and the kitchen. After washing off the blood he took down his coat from a hook, buttoned it round him and put on his hat.

"You are not going to follow them?" sobbed Mrs. Bowser.

"If we are left alone here, we'll be murdered!" wailed the cook.

"Get ready and come on," replied the victor of the fight.

"But where to?"

"Follow me."

And they put on their hats, locked the door behind them and followed him down to the gate and down the road to the station. He walked in advance and spoke no word.

They had only five minutes to wait for the midnight train, and he waved them into a compartment and came after.

"It must be that we are going home," said Mrs. Bowser as the train started.

"If we are, then I'll work for you for a year without wages," said the thankful cook.

Mr. Bowser heard them, but he gave no sign. He had spent a day and two nights in the country, and he was trying to calculate how many years it would take him to recover from his holiday.

Only once did he seem to take any interest in what was going on round him. That was as the train stopped at a station for a minute and a familiar voice on the platform was heard saying:

"Yes, gentlemen, he's fat and bald-headed and crooked in the legs, but you have the word of Dusty Bill that if he'd train for the ring none of the fellers of to-day would be in it."

M. Quad.

Next Week:

"He Establishes a Home for Friendless Dogs, and is Surprised at Results."

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The Palomino Stallion.

We drank our coffee, saddled up and rode away from the ranch house into the chill death of night that comes before the dawn, Tom and Jack and I.

For the first hour the three of us had but little to say as our cow ponies scuffled quickly ahead through the dark, beyond a word at the passing of a light and some disjointed talk of the chances for finding the "Wolf's Pond Bunch," a wild outlying drove of brood-mares and younger horses. There is always the risk, with such a drove, of their joining the mustangs, and we decided to take out their leader, the shy Palomino stallion, and break him to ride, putting in his place a gentler horse; one who would keep his family nearer home.

Clearing the thicker growth of the main valley we rode up an open draw that heads away towards the high levels of the bare divide. It was a night of stars; and obscuro deeper than the black void beneath a clouded sky. The creak and chafing of the saddle gear, and the quick crunching of the horses' feet, went strangely through the silence.

Beside me rode so much of Jack as was not lost in reverie, swinging easily along, with a certain care in the nursing of his cigarette and an absent tapping of his quirt against the horse's quarter. I could catch at times the soft gleam of the starlight in his eye, and my thoughts strayed vaguely on the trail of his, wandering with the sweethearts and the worldful of brothers the dear fellow lived for.

On my other hand rode Tom—a riddle not to be read by such key as the occasional emphatic slap of his quirt against his leathern chappareros. A sturdy figure, a careful seat in the saddle and a something in the strong face that little children loved.

As we rode steadily through the star-gloom, suddenly, from out a thicket, far off on the low swell of hill that outlines the gentle valley, there came, clear as a bugler's reveille, the morning song of a mocking-bird. Of all the sounds that haunt the night and cheer the dawn, there is none that moves one as does the surprising readiness of the mocking-bird's first call.

As the song ended, with the sharp finish of a challenge, Tom raised his sombrero and cried out to the bird the morning salutation of the Mexicans—a benediction, as it comes from the lips of the humblest peon, even as our Good-bye was meant to be; and Jack broke out with the plaintive, barbaric air and the queer, inconsequential phrasing of "Manana."

And then, as our ponies climbed from the head of the valley to the higher level, the great sigh and rustle of the wakening earth filled the air.

And so, while yet the prairie forms beside showed dimly, the night had lightened, till the long range of sight seemed the limit of eye power, and the chant of the matins of the wilderness rose all about us. The full choir of the song birds, the plaintive solo of the quail, the drum-like challenge of a distant gobbler, the mellow boom of calling cattle.

Presently there fell, in that strange light, a sudden hush; and we drew rein, rolling our cigarettes with heads bowed in absent reverence, and ere we had them glowing, the great world was all alight! The chorus of the dawn broke out again, a wave of crimson swelled across the east, and with that sudden change from night to day which is ever strange to him of northern breeding, the great, red sun swung slowly into the cloudless blue of the dry-country sky.

A couple of hours later we found the Palomino stallion and his harem, as they trailed out from watering at Wolf's Pond.

Queer cattle, these half-tamed range horses:

At first the mares and youngsters huddled wildly together as we rode up to within a hundred yards of them. The stallion trotted bravely out to meet us, the sunlight glinting in the bright cream of his coat and in the rare, silvery dappling for which the Mexicans named him. Soon they were all following us with a shy curiosity, but when we turned and commenced to drive them, the whole crew stampeded, and a pretty chase they led us for the first five miles.

The stallion weaving back and forth in the rear to touch up stragglers, kept the mad pace with scarce a break in the long, free swing of his trot.

By the time we neared the ranch we had them well in hand, however, and heading them in between the wide-spread wings of the horse corral, went tearing down that narrowing lane with long whips cracking, and each man in full cry and crowding them in through the open gap with a rush, we swung the high gate behind them.

After dinner Jack lassoed the stallion, casting with the underhand throw as the string of horses whirled swiftly about the circular fence. The loop fell open before the horse, and both his forefeet struck the ground inside it. Jack drew the loop tight, with a swing and a light pull, and, as the Monarch of Wolf's Pond range rose to the next leap, threw his weight upon the lasso and jerked both forelegs from under him, bringing

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him down broadside. Before the poor beggar could catch his breath Tom and I were upon him. I gripped him by the ear and by the under jaw, with thumb stuck through behind the nippers, and forced his head back upon his shoulder while Tom quickly slipped the lasso over the hind feet and stretched it taut to the snubbing-post. So he lay at our mercy while we carefully adjusted the close-fi ting "jaquima" halter and be t a forty-foot lead rope into the loop of it. To bit a bronco is a useless cruelty. Loosing the rope from off his feet we played him for an hour, a- one plays a fighting salmon, then staked him out on an open bit of sod to run the length of his rope, as, indeed, is the way of many folk, and to throw himself with the certainty of fate.

Next morning, after an hour's careful work, we had the Palomino saddled, ready for me to mount.

The beautiful brute stood blindfolded, his black mane and tail and waving foretop streaming in the breeze and every muscle tense and quivering with the raging fear that filled him. We had lashed a short stick, snugly rolled in a blanket, across the saddle, back of the pommel, to brace my thighs; shortened the stirrup leathers and tied a thong from one stirrup to the other to prevent their swinging.

Jack, on the off-side, held the stallion, dumbly crowded against his own horse. Tom sat his mount beside me. Coiling the lead rope in my left hand, I grasped, along with it, the reins of the "jaquima." With the right hand upon the pommel I swayed the saddle back and forth for a moment and then, with two fingers of the left hand in the check-piece of the halter, I put my toe in the stirrup and gently swung into the saddle. Settling myself carefully, I nodded to Jack to slip the blindfold. As he did so, Tom and he moved their horses forward.

The bronco stumbled awkwardly along with them, in the sudden daze of the sunlight, while I was filled with a most unheroic hope that he would run. But n a moment he caught sight of all the indignity that had been put upon him, and at that the war was on.

The wild swing of the straight, high leap, the racking wrench of t e buck, the dizzying jar of the stiff-legged drop, and the breathless speed of it!

For five minutes of chaos that bronco bucked, straight up and down, upon a space one might have covered with a waggon sheet, and I knew that such rough riding as I had done before had been but child's play!

Then, as I fell into it, and felt the grip of my high heeled boot in the shortened stirrup, the twist of my spur in the flank-girth, the brace of the roll across my thighs and grip of leg that held me there, I knew that I could win. I forgot the wrenching, jarring strain of it, and there came to me the nicety of balance and the quick interplay of muscle of the trained wrestler, but for how long? Already my head was swimming and my eyes blinded from the quick concussions. And then the bronco played the dre..ded "snake fence," twisting alternately to the one side and the other until it seemed as if the force of each sidewise drop must drive his shoulder to the ground. An agony of pain went through every joint nd sinew, as I dizzily followed the quick changing of balance. For an instant my heart failed me, and there was a st ange choking in my nostrils, but as I blew them clear I caught the scent and hot splash upon my cheek of my own blood, and with that the decent fellow, who has usually lived inside my jacket, went out from me, and in his place there burned in every vein, and swelled in every muscle a maddened b ute, as savage, as reckless, and ten thousand times as determined as the one between my thighs.

Jack, afire at the sight of the red trickle upon my white face, cried out, as with the war-shout of a charging captain:

"Quirt him! Dash him, quirt him!"

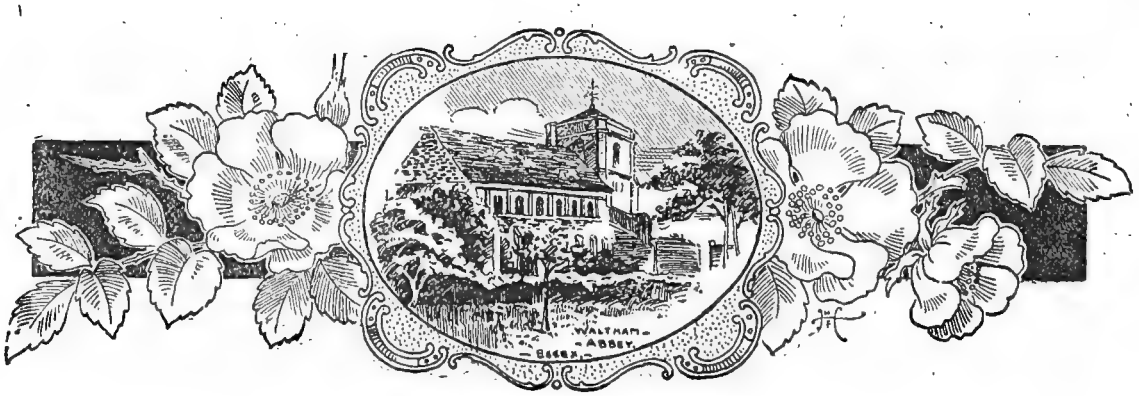
Tom, judging a weakening of the bronco's nerves, and seeing that the case was desperate, sent to my dull ears in that strong voice of his:

"Now, Tonie, give him his head!"

Slacking the lines, I lashed the brute on head and flank and shoulder with savage blows of the stinging lash of my heavy quirt, while Jack's great cow-whip hissed and roared as it cut burning gashes in the bronco's haunch. Tom, lurching savagely against me, staggered the stallion till he all but fell, and then, the rhythm of his bucking broken, and cowed by the punishment we gave him, he broke into mad galloping, while Tom and Jack, on either side, hustled him clear of every danger.

We ran that bronco till he staggered and was like to fall, and then Tom caught him by the "jaquima." I kicked my spurs out from the tangle of the flank-girth, and Jack, with his great arm about me, lifted me clear of the saddle—the Palomino stallion was tamed.

Charles Ridgeway Van Blarcom.



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A SMALL, slender person, with a fresh complexion, and a body and limbs so diminutive that they seemed a reduced copy of those of an ordinary woman, but possessed of a pair of large black eyes which sent the blood to the head of those upon whom she turned them—such was Noeline Fargues, the young mistress of the mill of Espibos.

A ramshackle old structure, built a-straddle of a brook, isolated in a grove of alders, leaning to one side, dilapidated, eaten away by the ivy that covered it, supported here and there by large beams that looked like crutches, but endowed with an alert and joyous clatter which made it resemble a talkative peasant woman—such was the home of Noeline, the old mill of Espibos.

The mill, decrepit as it was, had its faithful customers; its mistress, though small, had a goodly number of lovers.

Among these two were chiefly to be distinguished: Aristide Larrieussec, a big, chubby-cheeked fellow, the son of a neighbouring farmer, and Jouanin Lacaze, a fair-haired youth, who was serving in the position of an apprentice at the largest shop of the neighbouring village.

Aristide, the farmer, often prowled around the mill, his pockets full of fruit for the object of his affections. The two ate it together, seated in front of the millstone, while the iron wheel turned by the water sang its unceasing rhythmic song, and the white flour fell silently, covering everything around as with a frosting of sugar.

Jouanin, the shopkeeper, was less fortunate. He hardly saw Noeline except on Sundays, after Mass, when she came to buy needles and thread at the shop in the village. At such times Jouanin was flushed with joy.

He displayed before the kind eyes of the young girl all the spools of thread and all the papers of needles which the shop contained, and a long time was spent in making a selection, while occasionally the fingers of the two touched each other, in the midst of the articles they were handling.

Sometimes, too, of a Sunday evening, Jouanin would obtain a couple of hours' leave of absence, and bring his rod and line to fish in the brook of Espibos. He hardly ever caught anything, because the brook contained fewer fish than any other in the neighbourhood, but Jouanin would choose his position so that he could watch, at the same time, the windows of the mill and the float of his fishing-line.

He consoled himself for the immobility of the latter by looking at the charming things which were to be seen at the former.

At nightfall, Noeline would generally come to look for her ducks on the banks of the brook, and the grasp of the hand which the lovers exchanged in the Sabbath twilight was so sweet that Jouanin dreamed of it till the following Thursday.

The mistress of the mill had no hesitation in choosing among her lovers; it was Jouanin whom she preferred to all the others. She hardly thought of anything but him. Him alone she trusted entirely, with him alone she felt perfectly happy.

Fair-haired Jouanin was therefore authorised to pay his court, and Noeline's mother soon invited him to come and eat chestnuts at the mill during the long autumn evenings.

The first time, however, that the young shopkeeper went to visit his sweetheart, a strange thing happened. The cricket which always chirped behind the kitchen chimney remained silent.

"That is singular," thought Noeline's mother.

And the young girl, on her part, turned quite pale.

And when Jouanin came for his second visit, the same thing happened. As soon as the wooer opened the door the cricket ceased chirping.

Upon this Noeline's mother crossed herself, and her daughter clasped her trembling hands beneath her apron.

Every time that Jouanin entered the house the hostile cricket refused to let itself be heard, and in listening closely one could hear a peculiar sound, an inexplicable scratching in the chimney, as if the little creature were revolting.

Noeline cried a good deal, her mother was much depressed.

Like the majority of peasant women they both attached great importance to the chirping of the cricket.

They were aware that the song of one of those insects in a house insures to its inhabitants happiness and prosperity. The fact of it remaining silent whenever Jouanin was present was regarded as a sure sign that the poor lad would bring misfortune upon anyone who had anything to do with him.

And yet Noeline knew very well that her lover was

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good, honest, and industrious; she thought she could read many promises of happiness in his loving grey eyes; but the cricket did not agree with her. It might have proved dangerous not to heed its warning, and when the timid shopkeeper came, with bowed head and a lump in his throat to ask Noeline's mother for her daughter's hand, the old woman looked very grave, and the girl could hardly refrain from sobbing in her apron.

Jouanin was rejected. He was not given the true reason. It would have troubled him to learn that he brought bad luck to a house that he entered.

The mother gave him plenty of probable pretexts, and Noeline escaped from the room to hide her grief. She went and sat down by the millstone, in the old dilapidated mill, listening to the drops of water falling over the great iron wheel, and when she heard Jouanin closing the door as he left the house to return home by the alder-grove, along the murmuring brook, she thought her heart would stop beating in her breast, and she prayed aloud, as if she had been in fear of death.

The following week Jouanin left the country. With his clothes tied in a handkerchief, he went off during a cold twilight, when the last leaves seemed shivering on the trees. He entered the alder-grove, and went along the brook of Espibos.

The young mistress of the mill saw him coming, and remained standing motionless at her door.

"Good evening, Noeline," he said slowly.

"Good evening, Jouanin," she replied, lowering her eyes.

Then as he went on, she ventured to ask.

"So you are going to leave the country?"

He seemed to stumble a little on the path covered with leaves.

"Yes; I have found a place at Orthez."

She said nothing. Unconsciously she turned and twisted between her fingers a small silver cross that hung at her throat, and, with dim, troubled eyes, she watched Jouanin as he went, in the increasing darkness, through the silent woods.

* * * * *

A small, slight person, bent, with the lean body and limbs of a worn-out old woman, but still possessed of a pair of expressive eyes far younger than the face of which they formed a part—such was Noeline Fargues, the mistress of the mill of Espibos twenty-five years after the departure of Jouanin Lacaze. The peasant women of the South of France fade rapidly.

A-straddle of the brook, as of old, the mill still held its own, thanks to several supplementary crutches, and its clatter was as merry as that of a new one.

Noeline Fargues had not married Jouanin gone, no other lover had succeeded in touching her heart. Aristide Larrieussec, ardent though he was, had been disarded like all the rest. The young farmer, long inconsolable, had finally married a girl from the neighbourhood.

At the present day he visited his old sweetheart only for the purpose of selling her his grain. They had both probably forgotten the delicious fruit they had eaten together by the millstone long ago, while the white flour fell silently, dusting every object around them.

Jouanin, for his part, had never returned.

Many a time Noeline had wandered along the brook in the innocent hope of seeing the young shopkeeper appear before her. She had thought of him nearly every day; and almost every night, when the cricket sang she grew sad, and sat dreaming by her lonely fireside, until the resin candle had burned itself out.

Alas! Orthez was so far away! The people of Espibos never go to that town. At the shop in the village no one had heard anything about Jouanin. What had become of the fair-haired young apprentice? Noeline still prayed for him from time to time, when her poor soul was sadder than usual, and, by degrees, in the hollow breast of the lonely peasant woman, the beatings of her heart became cold and monotonous, like the clatter of her poor old mill.

One moonlight evening Noeline, who was then forty-two years old, was expecting Larrieussec, Jouanin's former rival. He was coming to sell her his corn, and to discuss the price. Noeline had offered twelve francs and five sous for the bag. The farmer had asked twelve francs and fifteen sous.

It was nearly nine o'clock. The night was warm, the moon cast its white light on the winding path through the grove. Noeline, standing on the threshold of the mill, saw someone approaching.

"That is not Larrieussec," she thought. "He does not come that way."

The unknown had a square box on his back. He walked slowly, seem fatigued, and, as if he were a stranger, looked closely at the brook, the mill, the trees of the grove.

"Good evening, my good woman," he said, as he stopped. "Would you like to see Our Lady of Lourdes?"

He was evidently a pedlar from the Bearn or the Bigourde, one of those travelling salesmen from Pau or Bagnères, who, under the pretext of showing a statuette of the Virgin, which they carry at the bottom of their box, sell to the country people rosaries, medals, as well as needles and thread.

"My poor fellow, it is rather dark for looking at your Virgin."

However, as the pedlar's voice sounded gentle, and as the Virgin's intercession might possibly induce Larrieussec to lower his price to twelve francs five sous, Noeline continued:

"Come in, salesman; I will look at your Virgin by the light of our resin."

So the pedlar followed her into the mill. When Noeline could see his face she felt the blood rushing to her thin cheeks, and when the salesman looked at her he seemed equally disturbed. At last, in rather a plaintive voice, the man asked:

"So you still live here, Noeline?"

"Oh, heavens!" replied the mistress of the mill, her heart throbbing violently, "is it possible that it is you, Jouanin?"

And for a moment they remained silent.

The water of the brook fell, in resounding drops, on the iron wheel of the mill, as it had done long ago, when the young shopkeeper courted the girl he loved. And suddenly, behind the chimney-piece, was heard the clear chirp of a cricket.

Noeline felt a slight pricking in her eyes, which seemed like the birth of a tear.

Jouanin told her of his life. He had succeeded well at Orthez. He had married there, he had had children, he had a shop there, and, at the present day, he and his family were happy. Only, he had felt a desire to see his old home once more, after twenty-five years of absence, and, from economical reasons, he had made the journey

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as a pedlar, selling thread, needles, and other cheap wares.

"Oh, I was quite sure you would succeed, Jouanin," said Noeline, with a sigh.

The cricket was still chirping behind the fire-place. The mistress of the mill seemed overcome by a growing emotion.

"Well, then," stammered Jouanin, "will you tell me, Noeline, why you would not marry me twenty-five years ago."

She could not answer at first. She pointed to the chimney with a shamefaced gesture, feeling tempted to hide her face in her apron, as she has been wont to do in her youth.

"It was because of the cricket," she confessed.

"The cricket?"

"Yes; I was a fool. I thought you would bring me bad luck—the cricket stopped chirping whenever you came to see me."

"It stopped chirping; and why?"

Noeline shrugged her thin shoulders to indicate that she did not know. And they both remained thoughtful. Their eyes did not dare meet in the light of the smoking resin.

Before long, however, Larrieussec, the farmer, whom Noeline had been expecting, made his appearance.

"Good evening! I salute you!" he said, after the manner of the peasants, who give as many greetings as there are persons in the company.

And when he had recognised the young shopkeeper of old, he cried:

"What, Jouanin, you here? What the dickens did you come for?"

"I came to talk over old times. That does one good at our age."

"Yes, indeed," replied Larrieussec. "The good old times! By the way, did not you and Noeline think of getting married in those days?"

"You are right," remarked the mistress of the mill.

"And do you know what prevented us?" asked the pedlar. "A cricket!"

"Pshaw! A cricket?" exclaimed Larrieussec. "But let me think—I remember now——"

He burst out laughing.

"Oh, that was a good joke!" he cried. "A good joke indeed!"

Then he went on seriously:

"Bah! You are happy, are you not, both of you? We are all happy here! So there will be no harm in confessing the little tricks of our youth. Ah, that was a capital one! Listen, Jouanin, we are as good friends as ever, are we not, old boy? Very well. It was because I watched you, and scratched the outside of the chimney there, towards our field, every time you came to court Noeline. You see, you were not the only fellow who was in love with her, and I know someone who was horribly jealous of you!"

Then seeing that this revelation had a chilling effect on his auditors, and that Noeline's eyes rested on him sadly, he said very generously:

"But that isn't all. I came to tell you that I accept your price, twelve francs five sous a bag. Will that do, Noeline?"

And Noeline answered in a low tone:

"It will do, Larrieussec."

Upon this the farmer bought some spools of thread for his wife, of the merchant of Orthez, and paid for them at once, without haggling.

"Adieu! I salute you!" he said as he left.

The two old lovers remained alone.

They did not say much. Jouanin slowly rearranged his wares. Noeline watched him, while unconsciously turning and twisting the old silver cross, which still hung at her throat, between her poor misshapen and bony fingers.

For a moment, quite weak and despairing, she felt tempted to imprint a kiss upon Jouanin's grizzled hair, once so fine and so fair, but she restrained herself.

Her lips were too old to bestow a caress upon a man

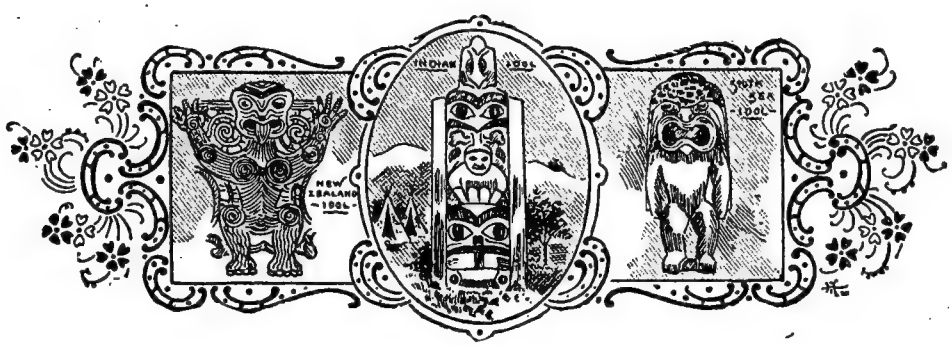
"Well, then, good-night, Noeline!" said the pedlar, lifting his box to his shoulders.

"Good-night, Jouanin."

They shook hands in some embarrassment, and then separated.

He followed the moonlit path through the grove. She, standing at the door of the mill, looked after him, while, behind the chimney-piece, the cricket chirped, calmly, clearly, indefatigably, as if it would have told Noeline of all the happiness which might have been hers.

JEAN RAMEAU.



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He Delivers a Lecture on the American Red Man and Duty.

"LADIES and gentlemen—It is needless for me to observe that this large and intelligent audience makes me proud.

"It was advertised that this lecture would be free, and you found the doors wide open to you. I feel it a sort of duty, however, to take up a collection. Any money so contributed will be evenly divided. One-half will go towards erecting a tombstone over the grave of the father-in-law of Christopher Columbus, as soon as the same can be located, and the other half will be economically expended in paying my personal expenses from town to town.

"As I pass the hat I will call your attention to the fact that if Columbus hadn't been backed by his father-in-law he could never have set out on his voyage of discovery, and that the said father-in-law has never had a fair chance in history.

"As I count up the proceeds of the collection, which amounts to five shillings, I wish to return thanks on behalf of Columbus and all his relations, and to assure you of my own personal gratitude as well.

"My subject to-night is the American Indian, and the duty of the white man towards him. It may surprise some of you to learn that you have a duty towards the Indian but I hope to make it plain to you. I turn the light of my stereopticon on the canvas, and you behold the picture of the savage at home.

"Instead of sowing or reaping he is engaged in a war dance. Instead of broadening his mind he is still clinging to his old time traditions. As he dances he yells for scalps and shouts for gore, and it hurts his feelings to remember that he can't break loose and tomahawk half-a-dozen women and children.

"Who is to blame for this state of affairs? All of us. Had we followed the finger of duty thirty years ago the red man of to-day would have been wearing tight shoes, tall hats and high collars, and his thirst for gore would have been washed away in mock-turtle soup and lobster salad.

"The Indian, as an Indian, can't help his ways or amend them. The white man has given him no choice but to continue on in the same old path. He has not been given enough religion to get up a fight at a street corner.

"We see this savage engaged in a war dance, when he might just as well be employed in compiling a family almanac or canvassing for life assurance, but he is barred from it by our want of interest in his welfare.

"We lay aside the picture of the war dance and substitute another. My heart aches every time I exhibit it.

"You see the picture of a squaw standing in front of her wigwam. She is not a beauty. She is stout and short and without grace, and life holds nothing for her. Years ago she was called Blue Bell, and the young men of her tribe raved over her willowy form and her fawn-like glide. Had the hand of the white race been extended to her then what a difference it would have made in her later years!

"Behold the picture of the savage at home."

"Instead of hunting rabbits with a club she would have been gliding about a drawing room. Instead of wearing an army blanket on an Indian reservation she would have draped and posed for a goddess before some great painter.

"In the place of gathering firewood and cooking mule meat she would have graced the banquets in palaces and had counts and dukes bowing at her feet. No helping hand was extended, and the Blue Bell with the willowy

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form was left to mature into a squaw, who smokes a pipe and whistles.

"I ask the red-headed man on the end seat, third row, how he would like to be an Indian buck in old

A squaw standing in front of her wigwam.

clothes, with nothing to do but lick his squaw in the morning, kick his dogs in the afternoon and shout at his papooses after dark?

"I ask the woman with the frozen expression over there by the post how she would like to be a squaw in a wigwam—her feet always cold, her heart always sad, and a consumptive cough ever warning her of a cheap coffin and a shallow grave?

"Our duty is a plain one, and yet we have neglected it. We have taught the heathen of Africa how to eat mince pie, and have taught the heathen of China how to devour plum pudding, but we have turned our backs on the red Indian, and had no concern in his welfare.

"I feel I must speak plainly on this matter. I feel I must say to the fat man with the bald head and contented look on his face that he has been remiss in his duty and ought to be ashamed of himself.

"Do not argue that it is now too late to undo this great wrong—to make good your neglect and indifference. I give you another picture. It is a papoose. In forwarding the picture my artist forgot to mention the sex, but that makes no difference. It is a child growing up. Unless we reach out our hands it will grow up to be a buck Indian with no ambition beyond whooping for scalps and trapping wolves, or a squaw whose life will be devoted to tanning deerskins and roasting prairie dogs.

"My dear friends, I think I can detect looks of sympathy on the faces before me. I think I see mental resolutions to do your duty in the future.

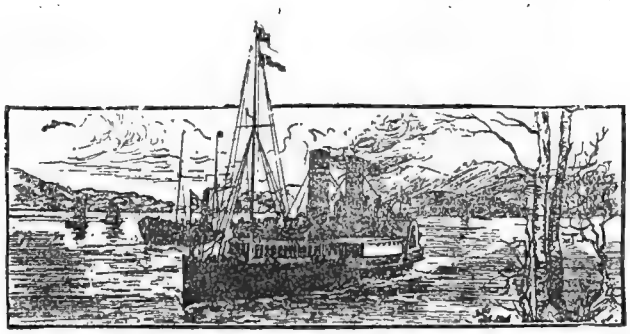
"My feelings in the matter almost oblige me to announce that another collection will be taken up as a fitting close to the meeting, but prudence bids me not to overdo a good thing. In order to prevent a stampede in which numbers of you might be killed or injured, the collection will be dispensed with, but as you depart for your homes think the matter over seriously and earnestly.

"The Indian wants to be uplifted. He wants to leave behind him his wigwam, his tomahawk and his buckskin shirt. He waits for you. Refuse him your moral influence and he remains as he is; extend your hand and

The papoose.

it won't take ten years before he will be eating with a fork and promoting trusts and syndicates for the benefit of mankind."

C. B. Lewis.



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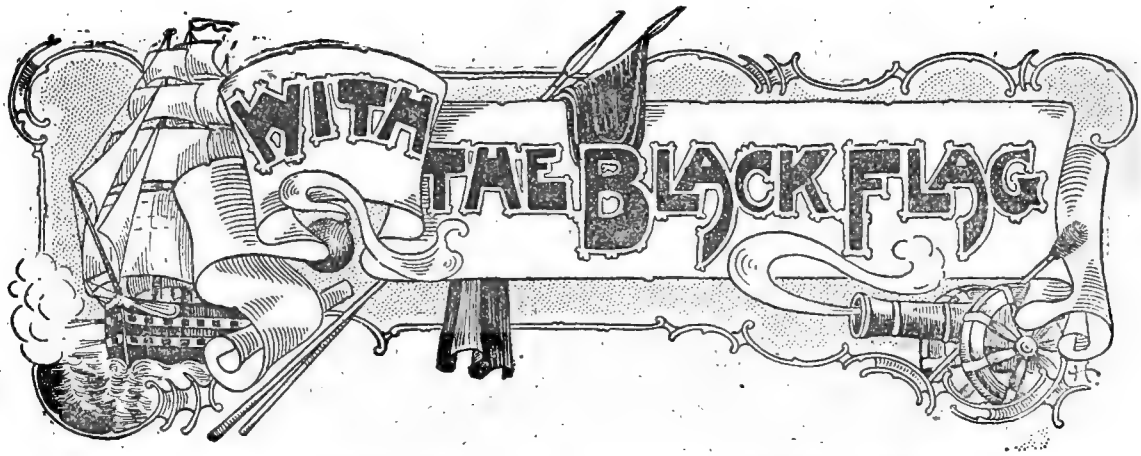

A ROMANCE OF LAND AND SEA.

By William Westall.

Author of "With the Red Eagle," "The Phantom City," "Nigel Fortescue," etc., etc

CHAPTER X.

Arrival at Angostura.

As Diaz fell dead on the deck the officers who were near made a rush at Arismendez, but interposing with our pistols we kept them at bay while he went to the break of the poop, and spoke to the crew.

"Captain Diaz was a traitor, he meant to surrender the ship to those two Spanish cruisers which, in an hour, will be within range. You know what the result would be; we should all have our throats cut. As the only means of saving the sloop and our lives I have put him to death. Captain Cautley, who is as brave as Captain Davis and, like him, an Englishman, will take command, and if we cannot give the cruisers the slip we shall engage them. Better die fighting than be killed in cold blood. *Guerra a la muerta. Viva la Patria.*"

"*Viva la Patria! Viva el General! Guerra a la muerta!*" shouted the Zambos with a great shout.

"You see, gentlemen, the crew are with us," said Arismendez turning to the officers, "and any man of whatever rank who refuses to do his duty and obey his new captain will be treated as a mutineer. Now, your orders, Señor Capitan."

"Lower the Venezuelan flag and up with the British ensign," said Cautley. "Square the yards by the lifts. Up with the foretop-gallant sail and the fore-studding sails. Up with the helm. Pipe all hands and clear for action."

This order was received with a cheer. The Zambos scented battle.

The brig was now before the wind and heading almost due west. A few minutes afterwards the cruisers changed their course and followed in our wake. But they were still three or four miles away and we all watched keenly to see whether they gained on us, or we on them, a question on which depended all our lives; for a fight with the two would have only one result.

It was only when the bustle of making sail, clearing for action and the rest, had subsided, that I could think over the drama that had just been enacted. It seemed to me that if killing in cold blood can be justifiable, it was justifiable in this instance. Slaying Diaz was the only way of saving the lives of more than a hundred men. We could indeed, have tried to lay him by the heels, but the officers and some of the watch, not knowing our motive, might have taken his part and defeated our object. Moreover, in the presence of a danger so formidable and pressing half measures had been folly, and in my opinion Arismendez not merely showed great resolution and courage, but did the right thing at the right time. He did not inform us of his design lest we should demur to it, and as he only decided to act when it became evident that the two ships were Spanish cruisers, there was no time for argument and no room for hesitation. Necessity has no law, and this was a case of dire necessity. We had either to strike or die.

Moreover Diaz was a double-dyed traitor and richly deserved his fate. Among his papers was found evidence that he had been in regular communication with the commandant of Cumana.

The cruisers had changed their course and were in hot chase, but the brigantine, being an indifferent sailer, was falling behind. The sloop, however, was slowly but surely gaining ground, and it began to look as though she would overhaul us before dark.

"If she does I shall engage and try to cripple her before the brigantine can come to her help," said Cautley. "All I ask is half an hour, for if we don't do it in that time we shall not do it at all."

Before long the corvette, a bigger ship than the *Libertad*, opened on us with her bow-chasers, but as the first shots fell short and every shot checked her speed, this was to our advantage, though we were presently hit, splinters flew about in all directions, and two or three men were wounded.

When she came within range we opened fire with the two carronades which the skipper had mounted on the poop, hulling her repeatedly, yet failing to damage her rigging as he had hoped.

Meanwhile the brigantine was falling further and further behind.

"I have got the time I asked for," said Cautley, "but I shall hold on a bit longer. No use throwing away a chance."

Nearer and nearer came the corvette. Her decks were crowded with men, of whom she had probably twice as many as ourselves.

At the last moment, as it seemed, the Spaniard being within musket shot, Cautley luffed round, thereby bringing the *Libertad* athwart his bows, at the same time delivering a broadside that swept his decks, a compliment which the

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sloop promptly returned. After they had pounded away at each other for several minutes she ranged alongside and grappled, a manœuvre which Cautley was unable to prevent owing to the jamming of the *Libertad's* rudder. For with the brigantine rapidly approaching he had no wish either to board or be boarded. His game was to disable the corvette and get away.

But the Zambos yelled with delight, and, when the ships touched, fully two score of them, heedless of orders, leapt on the sloop's decks, at the very moment we were being boarded by as many Spaniards. We should have had more of them if the grapples had not given way and the vessels separated.

On which the action now ceased, for neither ship could now fire into the other without destroying some of her own people, and so hot a hand-to-hand fight was being waged in both that nobody had a mind for aught else.

The Zambos, as Davis had said, and as we knew, fought like fiends. They seemed positively to enjoy killing and being killed, and in the end all who boarded the sloop were killed. The Spaniards who boarded us shared the same fate. It was no more possible to save any of them than if the Zambos had been so many tigers, and only Cautley and myself made the attempt, at the risk of our lives.

While this was going on the brig and the brigantine had drifted further apart, and the carpenter having succeeded in repairing the *Libertad's* rudder the skipper put her again before the wind.

But instead of chasing us as we expected she put about.

"You see, gentlemen, the crew are with us," said Arismendez, turning to the officers.

"What has happened to her?" I asked Cautley.

"Badly hurt, I should say. By Jove! she is settling by the head. It looks as if she had got a shot between wind and water. Don't you see how high her stern is? The best thing that could have happened—for us. The brigantine will have too much to do rescuing the crew and saving the stores to trouble us, and our rigging is in such a state that I doubt whether we could outsail her, slow as she is, and the crew is so weakened that another engagement just now is not desirable; we might come off second best."

When we last saw the cruisers they were within hail of each other, the sloop low in the water and evidently sinking. So soon as night hid them from our view Cautley put the brig on the starboard tack, and at daybreak we were once more in a position to bear up for the Bocas, which we passed without seeing anything more formidable than a merchant ship, fishing boats and coasting craft. The Gulf of Sadness, a vast sheet of waveless water, discoloured with the *débris* brought down by the great river, looked as melancholy as its name.

Borne along by a gentle breeze we entered the Orinoco by the Great Mouth, and were presently in the main channel, which is nearly as broad as the Straits of Dover, but the navigable part for vessels of the *Libertad's* size being little more than a mile, the ascent of the stream is both dangerous and troublesome, and were it not that the wind blows almost constantly from the north-east it would be impossible to stem the current which runs at the rate of four miles an hour, and in the rainy season, at the rate of five or six miles an hour. When the wind was contrary for a time, owing to the windings of the river, warps were carried out and fastened to the trees along the banks, whereby the difficulty was surmounted and the fair wind recovered.

Just as the sloop entered the river a large schooner was observed lying at anchor, under the land on the side of Cape Barinas. After a long look at her the skipper pronounced her to be a Spaniard.

"At any rate she shows no colours, which is a bad sign. Going back is out of the question, if she tries to bar the way we must fight for it," he said, and gave orders to pipe all hands and clear the decks for action.

"What are you going to fight, Señor Capitan?" inquired the Indian pilot, whose eyes were better than our glasses.

"What an absurd question, Sanchez! Don't you see that Spanish schooner riding at anchor under the bank there?"

"That isn't a schooner, Señor Capitan," answered the Indian, laughing silently.

"What the dickens is it, then?" answered Cautley, evidently annoyed.

"Two pine trees sticking on a sand bank."

And so it proved, the stream had brought them down and set them up, but, as seen from a distance the resemblance to a two-masted ship was perfect, and deceived so sharp-sighted a seaman as the skipper.

When evening came we let go an anchor and sought repose. But the hissing of water-snakes, the splashing of alligators as they plunged into the turbid water, the howling of araguatoes, great red monkeys with terrific voices, and the attacks of myriads of mosquitoes, made night hideous and sleep impossible. We sat on deck smoking, but even fifty cigars and pipes, kept continually alight, failed to protect us from the hordes that thirsted for our blood, and, like Spaniards, gave no quarter.

Nothing so much struck me in South America as the profusion of animal life. Water, earth, air and woods, teem with it, to such an extent indeed, as often to render the lives of those "not to the manner born" a burden and a torment.

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When she came within range we opened fire.

At sunrise we weighed and went on, and the further we went, the finer became the scenery. The meandering river was so wide, and islands were so numerous that it was like sailing through a long succession of beautiful lakes bounded by lofty mountains and wood crowned heights. The banks on both sides are covered with primeval forests of majestic trees, many of them hundreds of feet high and linked together by the *bejuco*, a gigantic creeping plant so thick as a ship's cable. For years after the trees decay they are kept in position by these great plants which bear a strong likeness to the huge water-snakes that lurk in the swamps beneath. Other parasitical plants are aglow with richly-hued flowers, festooned on the trees to which they cling, the whole, as seen from a ship's deck, looking like a panorama of gorgeous gardens.

Parrots, macaws, toucans and other birds of brilliant plumage complete the splendid picture and fill the air with their discordant cries, to which, at measured intervals, answers the metallic note of the bell bird, at one moment sounding close to the ear, at the next dying away in the distance. In the small creeks, over-arched with superb evergreens, you may see spoonbills, pelicans and gigantic cranes, all busily fishing, while hard by, in the main stream, a huge alligator floats among the bulky manatos and agile tomenos that are ever rising to the surface and blowing in shoals.

So, though our nights were wretched, our days were not unpleasant There was much to see, and the novelty and strangeness of it all kept us in a continual state of excitement and delight. Otherwise we should have found the voyage as tedious as it was slow, and we were not sorry when it came to an end, and the *Libertad* let go before Angostura.

The Orinoco is hereabouts so compressed between high rocky banks as to be little more than two miles in breadth, and so deep and turbulent withal that crossing it is often both difficult and dangerous.

Angostura, or more properly, San Tome, is built on the face of a rock which rises abruptly from the river to a fort on the summit of the hill, whence can be seen a great part of the provinces of Barcelona, Guyana and Cumana, with their vast forests and wide stretching savannahs, and in the near distance rich pastures thronged with cattle, and country houses embowered in plantations and groves. No site could well be more charming, and, as seen from the river, Angostura, with its white buildings, rising one above the other, gaily painted verandahs and steep streets, looks wonderfully bright and picturesque.

So soon as it became known that General Arismendez was on board the *Libertad*, we had visits from some of the leading personages of the place, who made much of him, as also of Cautley and myself when we were presented to them, which though pleasant enough in one way involved more kissing from moustached and garlic-perfumed lips than we quite liked. At least a dozen houses were placed at our disposal, with a flourish of fine phrases, of which only the Spanish language is capable, but knowing that these invitations were not meant to be accepted I thanked our new friends for their kindness in the effusive fashion of the country and said that we had arranged to take up our quarters at the posada.

Arismendez went to the governor's palace, and on the following day we were presented to several members of the government, when the general, after making his statement and calling upon Cautley and myself to corroborate it, produced the dispatches which Urdenetta had confided to Diaz, as also the document proving the latter's treachery.

"It was not necessary. We would have taken your word for it, General," said the secretary of state urbanely, "as I take it for all you have told it, and we are greatly indebted to you and these English gentlemen for saving the ship, and also for the other services which they have rendered the Republic. I shall now open the dispatches addressed to the government, the ones addressed to the Supreme Chief, who is with the army at the llanos (plains) of Apura, will be forwarded to him on the first opportunity.

"These charges are absurd on the face of them and unsupported by a single proof," he added after reading his dispatches. "All who know General Arismendez—and who does not?—know that he is too good a patriot to provoke a mutiny among his own troops. But I shall have to submit this dispatch to Congress, together with a report of my own, and any written statement which it may please his Excellency to make."

This was done, and in the result Congress not only acquitted Arismendez of the charges brought against him by Urdenetta, but gave him a vote of thanks and made him Vice-President of the Republic, so that by sending him to Angostura his adversary did him a good turn, the vice-presidency being of course an office of much greater dignity than the governorship of Margarita.

In the meantime Cautley and I were enjoying ourselves. The governor gave Arismendez a banquet at which we were present, as also at a ball given by another personage, and we received more invitations to dinners and dances than we were able to accept. Which was an agreeable change from the monotony of Margarita, and it was pleasant to be once more in a civilised community, though it was not the civilisation of Europe.

The street boys smoked big cigars, and wore nothing but straw hats, the Indian women, whom we sometimes met in our rides, dispensed even with hats, carrying under their arms only a short gown which they slipped on before entering the town, by order of the police, though not always, the rule being more honoured in the breach than the observance.

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But everything comes to an end, even zest for enjoyment, and just as we were beginning to weary of our holiday and long for a more active life, we received a request to wait on the Vice-President at his official residence, whither we of course repaired at the appointed time.

"Well, señores, are you tired of dancing and feasting?" he asked, with a smile which was meant to be pleasant.

"Not tired, yet quite ready for something else," I said.

"A little fighting? If so, I think I can oblige you."

"If it's fighting I am at your Excellency's disposal," put in the skipper with characteristic promptitude.

"Good! I told my colleagues that we could always count on El Capitan. Well, you are to take command of a squadron of large flecheras with orders to cruise off the mouths of the Orinoco and in the Gulf of Paria."

"I thank your Excellency and accept the post with pleasure. When shall I sail?"

"So soon as the flecheras are ready. Probably in less than a week. The mission I have to propose to you, Major Wyvenhoe, is of another sort, perhaps even more dangerous. Yet though I should like you to undertake it, I do not press it upon you. Accept or reject it as you may deem best. It is taking important dispatches to the Supreme Chief, who, as you know, is in the field, which as yet we have had no opportunity of sending to him. Work for a courier or orderly, you will say. But several of our couriers have lately fallen into the hands of the Godos (Goths, *i.e.*, Spaniards), and though their orders were to destroy their dispatches rather than let them be taken they have not done so, and the results in more than one instance have been disastrous. For the Spanish commanders not only spare the lives of couriers who are captured with dispatches, but let them go. Those who make away with their dispatches are themselves dispatched. Now when a man knows that by keeping a certain piece of paper he will save his life he generally ends——"

"By keeping the paper."

"Exactly."

"But how do the Spaniards know that any chance prisoner whom they take is a courier?"

"They don't; only if he has dispatches they reward him, and if he has not they kill him. So it comes to the same thing. Therefore we want to intrust these dispatches I have spoken of to somebody who is willing to take oath that in the event of his being in danger of capture he will destroy them; a man of honour who will die rather than break his word. Such a man as yourself, major. Moreover, by engaging in this enterprise you will make the acquaintance of Don Simon Bolivar, who, though I am not blind to his faults, is a remarkable man, and if you get through with these dispatches you will win his favour. You will also be able to tell him what happened at Margarita, and refute the charges made against us by Urdenetta. But do not decide hastily; take time for reflection. It will be a perilous undertaking; the country higher up the river swarms with Godos, not to speak of other dangers."

Arismendez put his proposal in such a way that I could not decline it without exposing myself to an imputation which I did not care to incur. Moreover, though I was not so quixotic as to court danger, I had never shrunk from an enterprise because it seemed perilous. Also I wanted to go to the front and see this wonderful Mr. Bolivar.

"I have decided already, Señor General, to take these dispatches to the Supreme Chief, or so far as the Goths and other enemies will let me," I answered.

"I thank you, señor, but I shall not take your answer now. Think over it, and if you are in the same mind to-morrow, do me the favour to breakfast with me here at eleven, and I will introduce you to your associate."

"I shall have a companion then?"

"Yes, two are better than one, they can help each other both in council and action, and Don Iago Santleo, a captain in our service, is a very gallant gentleman, whom I am sure you will like. Being anxious to join the army I have no doubt he will be glad to bear you company, and as he knows the country will serve both as comrade and guide."

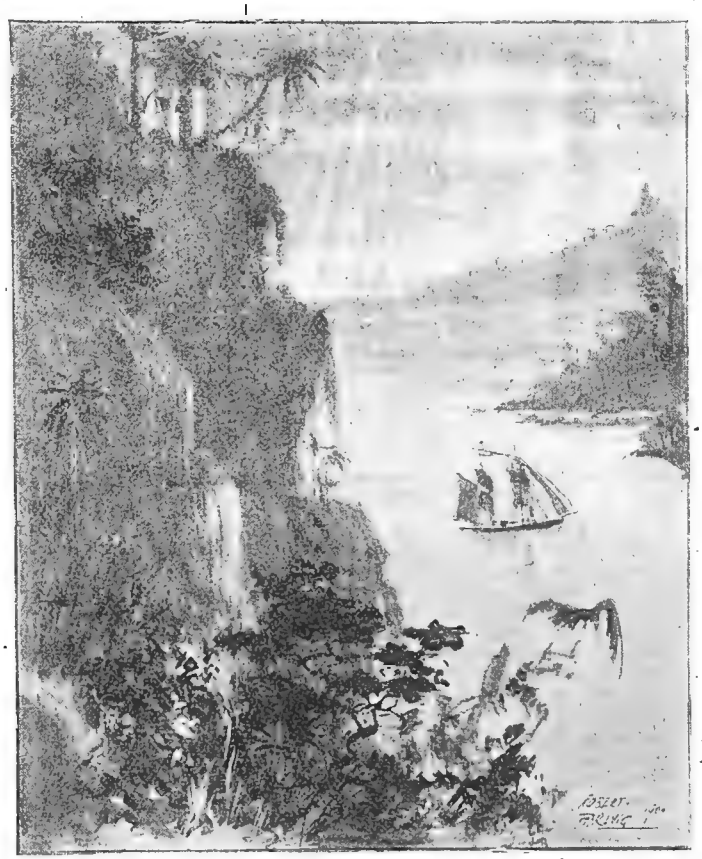
"And I am sure from your account of him, a very desirable comrade. Your Excellency may expect me to breakfast."

And then, the business being concluded, we made our adieux.

"We could not go on fooling here much longer. All the same, I am very sorry," said the skipper, sadly.

"I know what you mean. We shall have to part. I, too, am very sorry. We have not known each other very long, though long enough to become good comrades and fast friends."

On the following morning I breakfasted with Arismendez, and met Señor Don Iago Santleo, my future comrade. I liked the gentleman so soon as I clapped eyes on him. Tall and stalwart he was, and well set up; in feature bold and handsome; in age, twenty-five or six; his jaws, like his shoulders, were square; his eyes blue; his hair



At sunrise we weighed and went on, and the further we went the finer became the scenery.

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tawny; his expression frank and manly, and he had a winning smile and a joyous laugh.

"You are still in the same mind?" demanded Arismendez.

"Yes, Señor, else had you not seen me here."

"Good! Don Iago, I am glad to say, has already agreed to be your companion, and I hope you will have good fortune and be good friends."

"Unless we are good friends we are not likely to have good fortune, Señor General," said Don Iago. "Without friendship there can be no union, and without union no strength; and for this expedition we shall need all our strength and all our wits."

"I think we shall be good friends," quoth I.

"We want you to do us a great favour, Senor Wyvenhoe," she said archly.

"So think I; nay, I am sure," said he, and so heartily withal that I was fain to think that the liking I had conceived for him he had conceived for me.

We learnt from Arismendez that as the dispatches were still to write, and would have to be written small so as to diminish bulk and facilitate concealment, we should not be able to set out for three or four days, whereupon, breakfast being over, we separated, the general to attend to his official duties, Don Iago and I to smoke in the verandah, where we had an agreeable talk, in the course of which, after telling him something about myself, I insinuated an inquiry as to what part of the country he might come from.

"The west," he answered, pointing in that direction.

Which I thought rather vague.

After answering some questions which he put about England, I remarked that he looked more like an Englishman than a South American.

"You flatter me," he answered, lightly laughing. "But if being born in the country and being descended from forefathers who settled in it more than two hundred years ago make one a Venezuelan, I am a Venezuelan. Are you going to Señora Calzada's dance to-morrow night? An old family hers—or rather her husband's, of pure Spanish blood, and belonging to the first order of colonial nobility, and, what is still better, she has two charming daughters, Pepita and Luisa."

"We have been invited, my friend and I, and we shall certainly go if only for the pleasure of meeting you and making the acquaintance of these two young ladies."

So Cautley and I went and were not disappointed in Pepita and Luisa, who were quite as charming as Señor Santleo had said—beautiful brunettes with great black eyes and raven hair, floating about the ball room in clouds of white muslin and as gracious as they were graceful. I danced with them several times, as also did Don Iago, and I rather thought that Luisa honoured him with her preference while Pepita favoured me. But about an hour before the party broke up both of them were hanging on his arm, talking to him so earnestly that I began to feel a little envious. Presently, however, Pepita, whose fan was only a degree less expressive than her eyes, beckoned me to them.

"We want you to do us a great favour, Señor Wyvenhoe," she said archly. "But first of all are you a Christian?"

"Of course I am a Christian, and as for the favour, you have only to name it; it was granted before it was asked."

"How good of you! I felt sure you would, as I told Luisa. We have a tiny nephew who came into the world only a few days ago. He is to be baptised the day after to-morrow, and we want you and Don Iago to be his godfathers. He and you have blue eyes and fair hair, and blue eyes are so beautiful and rare that we think they would bring the dear baby good luck. Don Iago has given his consent, and I cannot tell you how happy you have made us by giving yours."

Had I been given time to think and not already compromised myself, I should certainly have said no, but I was completely out-manœuvred, and I perceived too late that by saying I was a Christian I had owned to being a Catholic, the one, in Pepita's opinion, implying the other, and my Protestant principles were confounded by her great black eyes which glanced at me over the edge of her fan in a way that had we been *en tête-à-tête* would either have frightened me out of the room or made me forget Araminta's treachery.

All I could do or at any rate all I did, was to protest my delight at being able to oblige her.

"And you and Don Iago will be compadres," she went on. "Which as you and he are going on a dangerous expedition will be a great advantage, especially to you."

I thought she was laughing at me.

"But how will that be an advantage—on a dangerous expedition?" I asked.

"Oh, you don't know that in South America the tie between compadres" (co-sponsors to the same infant) "is considered as close as that between brothers. You and Don Iago will be sworn friends, pledged to help each other even at the peril of your fortune and your lives."

"We take each other for better or worse, as it were? A sort of marriage?"

"Almost," returned Pepita, blushing. "It is a bond nearly as sacred as that between husband and wife."

"By the way, do you know who he is and whence he comes?"

"No, on those points he is rather mysterious. When we ask him he sometimes says from the west, sometimes from the mountains. But that is nothing, he brought good introductions and we know that Don Iago Santleo is a true man and a noble caballero."

(To be continued.)

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PETTINGILL'S HUNT.

JIM PETTINGILL, who is a stout man, went home to his wife the other evening and asked her where she kept the key of his Gladstone, as he wished to pack up a few things and take the night train for Glasgow to look after some important business matters.

Mrs. Pettingill told him to go upstairs in her room and he would find the key in the pocket of her black dress, which was hanging on a nail behind the door.

Poor, foolish mortal, he did not know that it was easier for the eye of a rich man to crawl through a camel than for his miserable self to find the pocket of his wife's dress.

Blinded by his own confidence, he took the dress off the nail, and that moment his sufferings commenced. He took a short survey of the garment as he held it up in his left hand in order to locate the position of the pocket.

His eyes rested on a small opening, and he thrust his hand into it, only to find his fingers gliding through a kind of bottomless concern, and then sticking his arm into it to the hilt he observed that his hand was protruding from an aperture on the other side. This caused him to change the position of the dress, and he saw another opening, and sounded its depths, and ascertained that it was the same mysterious hole he had been in a moment before.

This slightly annoyed him, and, after throwing off his coat, he went again in search of the pocket. He saw a little slit on the right side, and a softer light came into his eyes. "This is it," he murmured, and, putting his head into the shallow flounce, commenced to grope for the key, which, however, was sleeping snugly in the pocket at least two feet away. Pettingill got angry. He determined to find the pocket or die with his face to the foe, and the next minute he commenced stabbing the dress with both hands, hitting it straight blows from the shoulder, and dancing round it, just as if he were engaged in a rough-and tumble fight.

He glanced at the clock, and saw that the train would start in forty minutes, and once more he jumped for the dress with a low yell that indicated plainly that he was angry enough to match himself against a hornet. He jammed his head into the folds of the dress, and commenced digging with both hands, and the air got full of satin bows, pieces of Watteau pleats and smothered growls.

While seated in a chair resting himself, he glared at the crumpled dress lying on the floor, and the idea occurred to him that the only way to keep the pocket from dodging him was to put the dress on. He did so, and then renewed the search, but his hand would slide into loops, furbelows, folds, flounces, and everything else except the much desired pocket.

This was more than he could stand, and he determined to take off the dress and tear it to pieces, and thus discover the dwelling-place of the pocket. He pulled the dress up over his head as if he were divesting himself of a shirt, and it got caught in his braces, and wrapped itself round his neck in a peculiar way, and he stooped forward and tugged at it with all his strength, but it would not give an inch, and appeared to tighten its grip round his head.

It was hot, and he was smothering in its folds, and, in order to release himself, he beat the air with both hands and danced up and down in one spot until the window-panes rattled.

The dress, however, knew that it was getting the best of him, and would not let him go, and then Pettingill, in his rage, made a blind dash and butted the basin and jug off the washstand and upset the rocking-chair, which prodded him severely in the ribs. The next dive he made the dressing-table suffer, and cologne bottles and powder boxes, mingling with a tin bath-tub and a bird-cage, rolled over the floor.

Mrs. Pettingill heard the crash, and hastening upstairs, discovered her husband lying on the floor on his back, with his arms and head bound up in her dress, and kicking both his legs in the air and using profanity to the tune of 140 degrees in the shade.

She pulled him out of the dress, and he sat up on the floor and gazed at her in a dazed way, and rubbed his ribs with one hand, and wiped the blood off his nose with the other.

There was a look in his eyes which told Mrs. Pettingill that it was not the time to talk to her husband, so she merely picked up the dress, and without any trouble at all stuck her hand in a certain place and took out the key, which she handed him without saying a word. It was too late to catch the train, so Pettingill quietly bathed his bruised head and then went to a locksmith's, and when he came home he brought his key with him, and it was chained to a bar of pig-iron. ROB WEEK.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE SEASIDE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Lost Provinces," by Louis Tracy, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. Robert Allan, of 14 Marylands Road, Maida Vale, W. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with Stories about POLICEMEN, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, September 3rd. Post-cards only, please.

What Have They Done with It?

A LITTLE girl made a really nice remark the other day.

It appears that on a previous visit to the seaside for an hour or two, the tide was right up, and she enjoyed the sight.

On this particular day she had just arrived with an excursion, and the tide was out as far as Southend can shove it.

The wee mite stood and gazed upon the mile of mud, and then, remembering the previous amount of water, asked of her teacher:

"What have they done with it? Does it belong to the East London Waterworks?"

Bless her heart, she thought it had been cut off.

R. A.

A Bit Awkward.

WHILST spending her August holidays this year at Scarborough, a young lady made her way to the cliffs to enjoy her copy of *Short Stories*, and, on her arrival there, found a young gentleman sitting at the end of a seat reading. This being the only seat available, she was obliged to take her place with the young gentleman, but sitting at the other end.

Shortly afterwards an elderly couple came along, and, after staring at the pair, the old lady exclaimed in a very audible tone to the man who was with her:

"Dear, dear John, another tiff. What a pity young folks can't agree."

E. C.

In Bonnie Scotland.

ARRAN is crowded at present, and among those who are making themselves happy are several theatrical celebrities.

To make their friends sweltering in the cities jealous they have been sending telegrams right and left.

To one man a wire was written:

"Having devilled curry here. Come and join us."

They reckoned without the lady in the post-office, however. She declared she was not allowed to send swearing telegrams.

"Ye mauna swear in a telegram, my man," she said. "It's against a' regulations."

It took the man and his friends two hours to convince the lady that she was safe in sending the wire, and then the actors debated whether the game had been worth the candle.

J. T. M.

Maritime Etiquette.

EXCITED LADY (on the beach): "Why isn't something done for that ship in distress? Why don't some of you——"

Coastguard (hurriedly): "We are doing all we can, madam, and have sent the crew a line to come ashore."

Excited Lady (to her companion): "Good gracious, Matilda, just fancy, the silly fellows were actually waiting for a formal invitation."

F. W.

Poor Fellow!

A CELEBRATED Parisian dandy was ordered by his physicians to follow a course of sea bathing at Dieppe.

On his arrival at that delightful bathing town he ordered a machine and attendant, and went boldly into the water.

He plunged in bravely, but an instant after came up puffing and blowing.

"Francis," said he, "the sea smells detestably; it will poison me! Throw a little eau-de-Cologne into the water, or I shall be suffocated!"

J. C.

Not the Drains.

A MEDICAL friend has just returned from a visit to a growing watering place on the Welsh coast. Inspecting some lodgings in a new quarter of the town he noticed a peculiar smell, and called the landlady's attention to it.

"Something must be wrong with the drains, Mrs. Davis."

"Oh, no, sir," was the reply; "it can't be the drains. There are none!"

He took his family to the old quarter.

W. H. L.

What She Thought Of.

I WAS walking along the beach at Southsea, admiring the last of the glorious sunset, when I became aware of the presence of a pair of lovers of the Cockney type, admiring also.

"Just look at it, Liza," said he. "It makes yer feel sort of dunno how, somehow, don't it?"

"Yes, ain't it lovely!" said Liza, dreamily.

I listened eagerly. This young lady might have a poetic soul—who knew?

"Don't it make yer think of a nice slice of streaky bacon?"

I left!

A. E. A.

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That Moss.

Edwin took Angelina to the seaside last month, and she prevailed upon him to spend an afternoon in fishing from a boat.

They had not been out long when she picked up a tin and removed the lid.

"What lovely moss!" she cried; then there was a shriek, the boat heeled over, and its occupants were thrown into the cruel sea.

After a desperate struggle, Edwin succeeded in rescuing his adored one from a watery grave.

For days she lay unconscious, and when at length she opened her eyes it was to find Edwin bending over her in tender solicitude.

Her face hardened, and Algernon groaned in spirit.

"Have you no word for the one who risked his life for your sake, my own?" he cried in bitter anguish.

"Begone, monster!" she replied, with an imperious wave of the hand. "Why didn't you tell me it was the worm-tin?"

W. C.

All Bets Off.

They were both enthusiastic anglers, and were staying at the seaside together.

They proposed to have a fishing match; the one who caught the most fish was to receive a sovereign.

All went well for a time, till one of them, thinking he had got a bite, leaned too far forward and fell in, and, to add to the irony of it, heard his opponent call out:

"All bets off. You're diving in after 'em!"

W. P.

Parrot Wit.

A seaside parrot show was held a short time ago, and each parrot was brought into the room in a covered cage, and a prize given for the parrot which showed the smartest wit when it was uncovered.

The owners uncovered the cages in rotation, and many were the witty remarks which were spoken by the parrots.

But the climax was reached and the spectators satisfied when one parrot hopped on its perch, and looking wisely round the room, exclaimed:

"What a beastly lot of parrots."

Needless to say it took the prize.

J. E. R.

Cowed.

Just outside Rhyl a man was driving some cows bolted from one farm to another, and one of the cows and climbed a bank.

Against this bank, and built with a sloping roof below it, is a blacksmith's shop.

At the moment that the cow got on the bank a Conservative politician was in the shop haranguing the blacksmith, a Radical, on what he was pleased to term "Radical lies and false promises."

"You returned a Radical for the county," said the Tory, "and now where's your cow and three acres? I suppose you expected them to fall through the roof!"

At that moment there was a crash, and through the roof there fell at the feet of the Tory disbeliever a real live cow. The politician gave a wild yell of terror and fled.

A. B.

A Very Good Guess.

A mother was assisting her little boy to master a geography lesson, and coming to the description of a desert she quoted a definition from the text book to the effect that it was a barren tract.

The little fellow repeated the phrase after her, but didn't seem to understand the meaning of the words. She then endeavoured to simplify the description by defining it as a "place where nothing would grow."

The boy's face brightened with the light of awakened intelligence, and the mother, proud and expectant, put the question.

"Now, Johnny, what is a desert?"

"Pa's bald head," was the prompt response.

J. W.

The Bull's Mother-in-Law.

Betty was milking the cow, and a mad bull was coming down the meadow to look for someone to assassinate. Still Betty milked on placidly.

An observer from a safe position saw, to his great astonishment, that the bull, when he got within a few yards of maid and cow, pulled up suddenly, and went off to assassinate someone else.

"Weren't you afraid?" the observer tremblingly asked Betty.

"Nae a bit," she replied, going on milking. "This cow's his mother-in-law."

A. H.

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Full particulars appeared last week, and will appear again shortly. They also appear in the current issue of the

Illustrated Weekly News,

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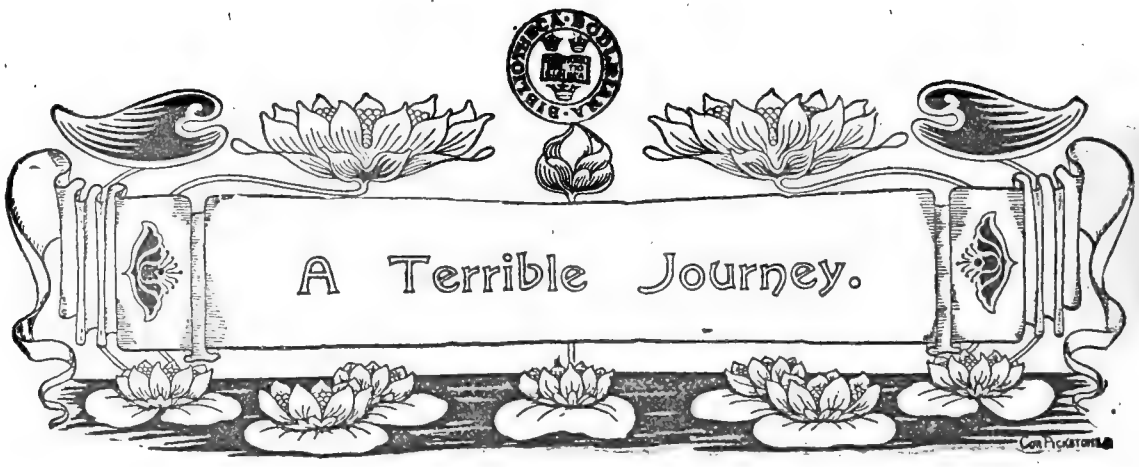

We are taught that Mary Tudor—her love of pyrotechnics having been satiated with various displays at Smithfield and elsewhere—expired, assuring all and sundry that the word "Calais" would be found engraven on her soft and tender heart. Though I do not for a moment infer that an autopsy would reveal anything out of the ordinary that could by the greatest stretch of imagination appear to have anything to do with the experience I am about to relate; still that terrible experience is so indelibly impressed upon my memory that, had I had the questionable privilege of existing in the sixteenth century, I have little doubt but that I should have gone down to my grave with the firm conviction that every fact in connection therewith would have been found set forth in the convolutions of my brain.

Ten years have elapsed since that awful night; yet my memory is as clear upon every detail as though what I have to narrate had happened only yesterday. Indeed I am often incensed against myself for my unconquerable terror whenever I recall what I suffered, and even now I cannot undertake a long night journey by train without dread and apprehension.

It was a week or so before Christmas in the year—well, in the early eighties, when I, a young and struggling provincial actor, was hurrying home to London, if not exactly on the wings of love, at all events in a state of high anxiety and excitement—which indeed is hardly to be wondered at, seeing that my young wife was not only anxiously awaiting my return, but was about to celebrate the event by presenting me with a token of peace and goodwill in the shape of a little son—or daughter. I had even refused a lucrative pantomime engagement in order to be with her, a sacrifice only an actor—and as I have said a young and struggling one at that—can fully appreciate; but the advent of the first-born not being an everyday occurrence, I felt justified in the course I was taking.

In a state of pleasurable agitation, now wholly unmixed with a sort of sense of paternal importance about to be thrust on me—a feeling that only exists, I may say, before the event; for never is a man compelled to take a back seat, or to realise his own unimportance more forcibly than on these interesting occasions—I started on my journey to town.

The company to which I had been attached finished up the tour at York, where I determined to avail myself of the earliest possible train for London; this was the Scotch Express, at half-past one in the morning.

It enabled me to attend a breaking-up supper given by some half-dozen or so of us who had become on friendly terms during the time we had been thrown together; so that with many mutual good wishes and in the best of spirits we parted very shortly after one o'clock, leaving me ample time to get down to the station.

The weather was so tempestuous that I would not hear of any of "the boys" coming to see me off. The thermometer stood at many degrees below freezing-point. The wind, blowing a gale, cut like a razor; while intermittent gusts of fine, powdery snow, completely blinded me from time to time as I struggled on my way.

This fierceness of weather rather pleased me than otherwise, as, fortified by an excellent meal, with the good wishes of my comrades ringing in my ears, with my heart beating rapidly and happily with the knowledge that in a few hours I should be with my best-beloved, I hurried to the station.

Heavens! Had I but known what was in store for me, how gladly I would have turned back; but it was not to be! Ere the journey to which I had so long looked forward was ended, I was to undergo an experience the like of which I would not wish my greatest foe to suffer.

Arrived at the railway-station my first care was to find an obliging porter whom I asked to secure me a corner-seat in a smoking- carriage when the mail-train should come in. This he promised to do, if possible, though he assured me that the trains generally were very full. But he "would do his best."

In spite of the storm, within five minutes of the advertised time, the mail steamed majestically into the station; the giant engine breathing hard and snorting contempt for the elements against which it had so successfully battled. I kept a wary eye on my porter who speedily shouted to me:

"Here y'are, sir. Third Smoking. A gemman's gettin' out here."

To bundle me in, together with my wraps and bags, was but the work of a moment. With a "good-night, sir," and a "thank you, very much" at the substantial tip the fulness of my heart had accorded him, he slammed the door and left me.

In less than four hours that porter's life would not have been worth a moment's purchase, could I have laid hands upon him.

* * * * *

On taking my seat and looking round the carriage, I

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observed that I should have two companions on my run up to King's Cross. One, a woman who was lying down at full length, asleep, carefully covered with voluminous rugs and wrappers; indeed I could only tell her sex by the sight of a long, golden curl which struggled out between the wraps and fell over her shoulder. The other, a man, a foreigner who was busily engaged in an animated conversation with the person who had just got out. They spoke in French and, as is usual with foreigners, in a very high tone, so that I could not help hearing scraps of their talk.

I afterwards had occasion to recall—only too vividly—every word that I heard pass between them. I remember how the light of the lamp fell upon the red-haired, pale, ferret-faced little man, leaning in at the window of the carriage, as he said (I translate as nearly as possible, for they both spoke the argot of the Quartier Latin):

"You've made a rippin' good job of it this time. It ought to be worth a pile of money to you. I only hope you won't be found out." To which the other answered:

"No fear! I'm much too fly."

"Oh, don't be too sure. Mum's the word—mind that."

"Well, you can rely on me, and she"—pointing to the recumbent form of the woman—"won't blow the gaff."

They both burst into a roar of coarse, brutal laughter, and at that moment the train started.

After carefully shutting the window, lighting my pipe and wrapping my rugs round me, I curled myself up in the corner opposite the Frenchman and tried to read. But try as I would, I could not refrain from glancing from time to time at my companion, who sat with folded arms, slowly chewing a big black cigar.

Under ordinary circumstances I am not apt to indulge in senseless antipathies; but this man aroused unconsciously within me a feeling which was a mixture of insecurity (I could hardly call it fear) and disgust. His very appearance was repellent.

Frenchmen always seem to me to be divided into two classes, the dwarfs and the giants, the *piou-piou* and the *cent gardes*. As the man we had left behind at York was a miserable specimen of humanity, so this man in front of me was a Hercules. I can see him now, his great bullet-head with its thick black hair sticking up like the bristles of a brush, his beady, shifting eyes, his cruel, thin mouth that slithered across his face, and his great bull-neck, blue with a dirty growth of beard, his shirt open at the collar and half-way down to his great, hairy chest.

I don't know why, but I remember thinking at the time that if ever he had an interview with Monsieur de Paris in the early morning, the window out of which we look into the other world, as Victor Hugo called it, would have to be enlarged for his accommodation. He wore a very tall, black, silk hat, which he never took off, and a long coat, trimmed and lined with fur, which had probably been new five-and-twenty years ago.

Yet, in spite of all this, I felt a desire to talk to him. He fascinated me in some mysterious manner, and at length I burst out with the original remark "that it was very cold." He glared at me from under his shaggy eyebrows, took the chewed black cigar from between his lips, and said slowly:

"I not speak Eenglish—mooch."

Now although I flatter myself that I can speak French fairly well, this man showed so unmistakably that he had no wish to enter into conversation that I could only gasp out a stupid "Oh!" and relapse into silence. I would not venture to tackle him in his own language.

Once more I tried to concentrate my thoughts on my books and papers, but at length had to give it up as a bad job. So I shut my eyes in an endeavour to get an hour's quiet doze before reaching Peterboro'.

However, sleep was not to be wooed. The thought of seeing Mary in a few hours, the excitement of saying good-bye to so many friends, a thousand and one waking thoughts, kept flashing through my brain, rendering the slightest approach to somnolence impossible. Most of all did I keep conjecturing who and what this strange couple could be. I wondered whether the sleeping figure was that of a woman or a girl. She looked very slight and small. Was she beautiful or the reverse? I wondered in what relationship he and she stood to one another.

As I furtively looked again at him—he was now diving into the capacious pockets of his paletot—without knowing what that relationship was, I felt a feeling of pity for her.

The man, having captured a large paper parcel as a result of the fishing expedition in his pockets, proceeded to open it. He was going to eat. He placed the paper across his knees, took a knife out of his breast-pocket and slowly opened it.

I gasped!

It was the most murderous weapon I had ever set eyes on. The blade, tapering to a fine point, was between six and seven inches long, and the handle was made of some curious green stone. As he clicked the spring, I felt an involuntary shudder run down my spine.

He ate as though he had not tasted food for days. His light refreshment consisted of half a large fowl, a long loaf, a Spanish onion, and a large piece of cheese. As I saw that deadly knife flash from one article to another, I shut my eyes and seemed to see a hideous ogre of my nursery tales feeding off little children. For a good half-hour he ravened over his food.

When he had left nothing but a few bones he wiped the knife, dried it on his coat, shut it carefully and put it in his pocket. I must own I felt relieved.

Then he fished once more, this time catching a bottle of claret, of which the cork had been previously drawn and replaced. I noticed this, as the lining of his pocket was wet. He threw back his head and let the wine gurgle down that terrible black throat till his thirst was quenched.

Then he returned the bottle to his pocket, lighted another black cigar and lay back in his corner, panting with exertion. I wondered what the poor girl was to have. Surely, his pockets could contain no more provender—and he had no other luggage.

Meanwhile I was feeling half-perished with the cold, and was thankful when we arrived at Peterboro'. Here, although we were behind time, I determined to get something to warm me or die in the attempt.

No sooner had the train come to a standstill than I made a dash for the refreshment-room, where I had just succeeded in getting down a cup of coffee strongly laced with brandy, when the stentorian "Any more for London?" was shouted out.

I had hardly time to find my compartment and clamber in when the door was shut and locked. I suddenly realized that the Frenchman was not there and I called out to a porter that someone else was coming in.

"Very sorry, sir. Can't help it. We're very late already."

Ere I could well grasp the situation we were off with a roar and a rattle, trying hard to make up for lost time.

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"By Jove," I thought to myself, "here's a pretty predicament—and no mistake. Here I am alone in a carriage with a woman I have never seen and who has never seen me. Her companion has disappeared, and I shall have to explain matters. We are locked in, and the train does not stop for an hour and three-quarters, that is until we reach King's Cross. She's been asleep since half-past one and will probably wake up shortly and then—" I dreaded to think what would happen. Should I wake her at once? No, "let sleeping dogs lie" is an excellent maxim. What would she do on arrival? Perhaps the ferocious Frenchman had got into another carriage. I hoped so sincerely. What a brute he was not to give her anything to eat or drink on such a night as this!

At all events he had some feeling, for he had taken off his heavy fur-coat and thrown it over her, completely covering her head. I wondered she wasn't suffocated. Well, I would keep wide awake, anyhow.

Curiously enough, as I had not been able to woo sleep hitherto, I now felt unaccountably drowsy. Perhaps it was the brandy. At any rate I soon fell into a deep but terribly troubled slumber. I had the most frightful dreams, blood-curdling and horrible, yet nothing like so horrible as the reality which was in store for me.

I awoke with a sudden start and, dazed for the moment, hardly knew where I was. Ah, yes, of course. I recollected. There was the mysterious woman still asleep.

I shivered with the cold. I took a little nip from my flask and looked at my watch. A quarter past five. I had slept for an hour. Thirty minutes more and we should be in London. In an hour I should be home. Home with Mary. Hurry on train; hurry on minutes she will be waiting for me.

It was still snowing fast and the wind shrieked at the windows as we rattled along. Whirr—whirr—whirr—bump—bumpety—bump. We were making up for lost time with a vengeance.

Heavens how that woman slept! She would hardly be able to move for cold and cramp on awaking. And how still she was! She had not altered her position for hours past!

I sat and watched her; and as I did so, my eyes became riveted on a dark spot on the floor about as large as a cheese-plate. It glistened from time to time in the fitful light of the lamp. Watching it intently, I saw that it was wet.

I went nearer, impelled by some unknown power. I saw it was growing bigger, as it was added to by drop after drop that fell and trickled and splashed from the seat on which she lay.

Was I dreaming? No. Like a flash of lightning the whole horror of my awful situation seized upon me. My body stiffened with fear, and I gave one inarticulate, impotent yell of agony. The woman was not sleeping—she was dead! Dead—murdered by the ruffian who, in escaping, had left me to face the hideous and inevitable discovery!

Now I understood the two men's horrible conversation. Merciful Heavens—they had laughed—"she could not blow the gaff." No, poor soul, poor soul, she was silent for ever! But, stay, perhaps after all she is not dead, but only wounded. I must see.

I pulled away the heavy coat that covered her. As I did so, one of the collar-hooks must have become entangled in her beautiful hair; for, ere I knew what had happened, the head had fallen with a dull thud on to the floor of the carriage, face downwards, the long golden curls all dabbled in that horrible pool of blood.

Then a frenzy of agonised despair fell upon me. I beat at the walls of the compartment. I shrieked. I tore open the window and seized the connecting-cord to stop the train. It was frozen as hard as a bar of steel. In vain I pulled at it; and when I desisted at last I wildly beat my hands upon my forehead. I found myself covered with blood from great gashes the icy cord had cut into my palms.

Think, if you can, of the agony of those minutes that never seemed to pass! What would happen to my poor wife? It would kill her. I recalled Lefroy and Muller and their awful ends. I wept—I prayed—I cursed—and then, I think, I must have lost consciousness.

When I recovered we were nearing London. Long before the train had come to a standstill at the ticket platform I had a dozen porters running after the carriage, attracted by my piteous shrieks and cries of despair.

As I struggled to alight, bleeding and haggard, I was seized by a couple of officials who demanded an explanation. I could only point to the carriage and mumble:

"Murder—there—murder."

The police were hurriedly called; but, before they could arrive, who should come tearing along the platform but the Frenchman himself.

"Seize him," I cried, "he's the man, he's the murderer."

He dashed at the carriage like an infuriated madman and came out, bearing under one arm the body of his victim, and in his hand—oh, to think of it!—the poor creature's head. A yell of execration burst from every one; but at that moment the guard of the train came up.

"Here, what's the row?" he said.

"Murder!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Murder be blowed. Why, this 'ere cove got in at Glasgow, and mighty partickler he was about his hautomaton as he called her; would 'ave a compartment to hisself. He's a French cove from the music 'alls."

The Frenchman bowed to me and said:

"Monsieur, I am truly sorry. This is my new invention—*L'Arcana Mysterieux*. The lady walks and talks, and then I cut off her head, and—always like a woman—she still converses. It is a novelty. I shall make my fortune. Alas! that the claret has fallen on her beautiful hair. But no matter, it will wash off. Monsieur, adieu."

And he got into a cab.

I fainted.

F. Hamilton Knight.

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THE TOWER CLOCK OF ROZSNO.

THE following incidents are set forth in an old chronicle of "Village Life in Hungary":

It is related how one day the beautiful Elizabeth Grünblatt returned, without warning, to Janos Gothard, her betrothed, his ring. Now it can readily be imagined how like lightning the news of this event spread around the town of Rozsno, and what a dust it raised.

And why not? Was not Janos Gothard son of May or Gothard, whose bears and forbears had always formed a powerful dynasty in their native village? Nor was a girl like Elizabeth Grünblatt to be picked up on every rubbish heap. She, too, came of a fine old stock, whose offshoots had frequently graced the judicial bench; nay, were old Joseph Grünblatt still alive—but that was neither here nor there. Even if young Janos Gothard were a personage with whom it was best to take liberties, surely a betrothal ring is not a fit object for such a pastime.

Hence great was the excitement. The people assembled in eager groups in the squares and streets, and discussed the probable outcome of the affair; general opinion leaning to the belief that the Gothard family would not accept the rebuff in silence.

Then broke in upon their disturbed minds this second wonderful event, which also spread like wildfire; the tower clock had stopped that morning at precisely the hour and the minute at which Elizabeth Grünblatt had drawn the ring from her finger!

It was exactly as though Providence had directly interposed to arrest the hands, and intended to hold them captive until the full truth of the matter should come out.

Now this tower clock had always been as great a source of pride to the Rozsnoites as the fair fame of their women, and here, at one blow of fate, was all over with both!

They had good reason, too, for their pride, particularly in the clock, for it was truly a marvel of its kind, so much so that the famous Albertus Turibius had journeyed away from Switzerland, the preceding year, expressly to study its mechanism.

The wardens had not been at all inclined to permit this profanation, but old Senator Komives gave utterance to this remark:

"Let us not close our ears to the man's request, since we can be perfectly assured that the wonders of our clock will find no room in his head!"

And such was really the case.

A whole week long he rummaged and poked and pounded about among its mighty wheels and hammers, its innumerable little rods and triggers, with the result that Saturday evening, when he had done, he knew precisely as much as he did Monday morning when he began.

There was but one man alive who understood the mechanism of the Kozsno clock, and that was Martin Szontágh, its maker, and he was dumb. But he could never, in any case, have been induced to reveal its secrets, since it was positively the only one of its kind in existence.

In the records of that day it is repeatedly set forth that, in all cases of dispute, where the knowledge of time was a necessity, the law decreed that that of the Rozsno clock should be accepted as the standard.

The remarkable feature of this clock was the separating, at noon and at midnight, of its face into two parts, allowing a cock to come forth, amid an insane din of hammers, wheels and springs, simulating the while a cry, like the crowing of a cock, which rang out over the silent roofs and into the busy movement of the streets this warning:

"Lutherans, look to yourselves!"

Now, all at once, the mighty thing was stilled. It was exactly as though it were making the mute declaration:

"I move not again by the breadth of a hair. Mornings can dawn and evenings fall for all me; I remain as I am so sure as God sees me. I have also shut the cock up away from you for evermore!"

Now is it really worth while, I ask you, to endure all this on account of a woman? To the Rozsnoites it was an indubitable fact that the stopping of the clock had directly to do with the whims of a capricious girl, else why could it not have stopped yesterday, or Elizabeth sent back the ring to-morrow?

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To all overtures looking toward a reconciliation the obst nate girl's only reply was:

"I would rather marry the devil than Janos Gothard!"

"Very well," flared up the affronted one, "I can't hand you over to the devil, but I'll do worse!" and he carried the matter into court.

The learned Paul Szakmáry was chosen as Gothard's counsel, Stephen Miskalczi that of Elizabeth. From now on these two honourable gentlemen shunted all the opprobrium of the affair off on to their own shoulders.

For three full weeks they hurled every possible epithet at each other through the medium of their clerks (that being the first stage of the suit); then, when their mutual wrath had reached the required p tch, they opened out upon each other with the usual charges and counter-charges.

Seven ecclesiastical gentlemen of the vicinity were selected as jury. They presented exactly the appearance, in their black robes, with the long white bands hanging down from around their necks, of seven bottles of medicine.

Pale and agitated appeared the ex-*fiancé* before the august body; proud and defiant Elizabeth Grünblatt. Heavens, how beautiful she was! Her snow-white gown clung tightly to her perfect form—it had been destined to be her bridal-gown, perhaps—and three roses glowed in her chestnut hair, all three blood-red, the colour of love and inextinguishable hate! And what the roses failed to express was given utterance to by those two stars, her eyes:

"No, I will never relent—never, never!"

In vain plaintiff and defendant were made to confront each other. The representatives of justice even took Elizabeth to one side and personally remonstrated with her; but to all she only shook her lovely head, "No!"

"Damnation will o'ertake thee, girl!" warned the foreman, George Fabriczy.

"Thou wilt be boiled in a kettle in the next world!" threatened Paul Szontágh, the scribe, who, in his mind's eye, could already see the seething cauldron into which the radiant young woman was to be plunged.

Verily, the Church deputes overfascinating tasks to her servant, the devil!

But through all the maiden remained steadfast, giving the honourable counsel thereby opportunity for much vigorous debate. At last the parties to the suit were conducted from the room and the jury left to its deliberations.

"I propose to the reverend body," opened the foreman, George Fabriczy, "that we declare the maiden guilty and sentence her as follows: For the period of seven years she shall not marry, neither shall she during that time indulge in any form of worldly diversion whatever."

"Let us put it to the the vote," said another. "'Yea' and 'nay'; 'nay' signifies acquittal."

Paul Szontágh called off the names, and inscribed after each the response.

"Peter Salitius?"

"Yea."

"Samuel Urszinyi?"

"Nay."

"Charles Vitoris?"

"Nay."

At this point Miskolczi hurriedly scribbled a few words on a scrap of paper which he passed over to Paul Szontágh.

The scribe, however, took no notice, but went on uninterruptedly down the list:

"Paul Bistriczky?"

"Yea."

"Constantin Revencsan?"

"Nay."

So far two "yeas" and three "nays." There were now only lacking the voices of Szontágh and the foreman. Paul Miskolczi strove, by every means in his power, to get Szontágh to read the writing on the bit of paper which he was now crumpling carelessly in his hand; but, all unheeding, he uttered, like the foreman, a "yea" in his turn. Thus was pronounced that hard decree which has been brought down by chroniclers to this very day.

Now, at last, Paul Szontágh opened the paper and read what was written upon it; word for word it ran thus:

"Elizabeth Grünblatt sent Janos Gothard back his ring because it is your reverence she loves!"

The world seemed to whirl in a circle round Paul, his blood surged and his eyes danced. The most beautiful and best-born girl in upper Hungary in love with him! How different her conduct appeared to him now! How had he ever brought himself to utter that "yea"?

"And now, Brother Szontágh, be pleased to take down the verdict."

The scribe seized the pen with a hand that trembled, and it was only by the strongest effort of will that he was enabled to write at the foreman's dictation.

"The parties may re-enter!" announced George Fabriczy.

When in the room Elizabeth and Janos remained standing by the door with averted faces. In a choking voice the young clergyman read to them the decree which ran as follows:

"That the sacredness of the holy institution of matrimony be preserved, and to ward from us the wrath to come, we do hereby ordain that the girl, who has held these both in so light case, shall, for the period of seven years, remain unmarried; she shall also, in that time, strictly abjure each and every form of worldly amusement."

Most cruelly was this conceived. Elizabeth was just three-and-twenty, add to that seven years during which she was not to lay the virgin's wreath from her beautiful dark head, and we obtain as a result, thirty, and—a full-fledged old maid! The reverend gentleman had reckoned out with extreme nicety the exact way to make of the radiant blossom a sapless stalk.

Janos Gothard announced himself as satisfied, and Elizabeth left the room, with downcast eyes, without a word.

The very next day Paul Szontágh and Miskolczi began to set on foot the most earnest measures to obtain a reversal of the ecclesiastical decision. They even finally reached with their petition, the very steps of the throne itself, but all in vain. The affair remained precisely where it was.

They had at last relinquished all hope when one day it came to pass that, on meeting old Martin Szontágh in the street, Janos Gothard, Sr., not only did not return his greeting, but pointedly turned away his head.

Now old Szontágh had the reputation of being a man who held himself in very high esteem. He was the maker of the famous clock, had been decorated by royal hands for the same, and this averting of a Gothard head he took extremely ill. Upon arriving home he wrote upon his tablets and handed them to his son:

"Have you any quarrel with the Gothards?"

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The young man then related to him the whole story. How beautiful Elizabeth Grünblatt had been tried and condemned, and how he, himself, was now consumed with love for her.

"Why haven't you said a word to me about this?" wrote back the father.

His son smiled sadly. What can a dumb man accomplish where agile tongues have failed? But the old man only shook his grey head again and again, and began hammering and snipping away angrily with his tools, for he had recently set to work with great zeal at repairing the disturbed mechanism of the tower clock.

Easter Sunday was drawing near, and on that glorious morning he had promised the clock should resume its wonderful career. It would be superb, would it not, on the day of our Lord's resurrection, to see the cock appear again between his open doors and hearkening out, as loud and shrill as ever, his admonishing cry?

The old man spent the last days before Easter shut up in the tower itself. Finally all was in readiness. Exactly at noon on Easter Sunday, in the midst of the hurrahs of a multitude gathered from miles around, the works of the far-famed Rozsno clock were set in motion.

The jubilation was great, but alas, of short duration. The clock went, but at what a consternating rate of speed! The hour hand galloped round the face twelve hours in one, the minute hand flew from figure to figure in the dizziest leaps and springs, while, instead of appearing once every half-day, as had been his custom, the cock struck open his doors every sixty minutes and trumpeted forth in a more terrific voice than ever:

"Lutherans, look to yourselves!"

"Woe, woe is upon us!" cried the people, beside themselves with fear. The three oldest senators betook themselves, panting, to Martin Szontágh.

"Disaster, master, disaster!" they cried. "Our clock is mad!"

A cunning smile played over Martin's grey, old face. He sized his tablets.

"The clock is but doing its duty, gentlemen. You all admit that the time it sets must, in every case, be accepted by Rozsnoites as the standard?"

"Yes, yes; that is true," affirmed the senators.

The old man pursued:

"You have condemned the girl my son would take to wife to a seven years' penance——"

"H-m-m!" growled Emerick Komives, a light breaking in upon him.

"I have, therefore, so adjusted the clock that it shall tell off those seven years in seven months!"

"But—but you will set it right?"

"When my purpose is achieved."

The deputation strolled, crestfallen home.

In an hour, I should say twelve, the reason for the clock's unaccountable performance had spread throughout the town.

The chief magistrate took counsel with his aids.

"The clock will bring disgrace upon us!"

"In just so much as it was formally our pride, will it now work our confusion!"

"Let us give in!"

Again the senators betook themselves to Martin.

"Elizabeth Grünblatt's time of penance shall be measured according to the clock's present rate of speed; but, in Heaven's name, let it, in future, run as he seems it and us!"

Thus it was that, at the very next grape-pressing, Elizabeth Grünblatt became Mrs. Paul Szontágh.

KOLOMAN MIKSZATH.

20 £10 NOTES GOING BEGGING.

YOU CAN HAVE ONE FOR ASKING!

THE MOST ASTOUNDING SCHEME EVER DEVISED BY ANY PAPER.

THE latest scheme of *PEARSON'S WEEKLY* is unquestionably one of the most astounding that has yet been placed before the readers of any paper. Briefly speaking, the Editor places you in the position of getting ten pounds by simply asking for it.

At six o'clock on Thursday evening, August 23rd, twenty men left Pearson's Buildings, each with a sealed envelope in his pocket. Each envelope is of linen, tough and unbreakable. No one but the Editor knows *exactly* what is in those envelopes, so the contents cannot be forged. Each contains, as a matter of fact, a letter signed by the Editor authorising the first person who asks for it to the sum of £10.

NOW YOU SEE HOW YOU CAN GET £10 FOR ASKING.

We don't expect you to rush out at once and ask every man you meet if he has the envelope. That would be foolish—a mere waste of time. Moreover, you would probably get a rebuff.

What you should do is to quietly watch everyone you come in contact with. If you think the man you see is likely to be one of these men, you can, in an inoffensive and quiet manner, simply say: "By-the-way, have you seen this scheme?" and show him this page. If he is *not* one of the £10 gentlemen he will say he hasn't seen the scheme, and will be interested, and thank you for putting the chance of making £10 in his way. If he is one of the Ten Pounders he will quietly and unostentatiously take out his pocket-book and hand you the sealed letter.

This you will at once post to us in a registered envelope, and WE WILL SEND YOU A CHEQUE FOR £10.

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Will look in shop windows.
Will loaf about the beach or parks.

In fact, will behave just like ordinary mortals.

They will wander about our big cities, they will alight from trains at wayside stations, and walk about villages and small towns, and they will altogether give every opportunity to people to get those £10 notes.

If you are at this moment in the train one of these men *may be opposite you, or sitting next to you!* Just casually show him this page. If he's one of them you'll get £10.

You will at once say: "Oh, yes, but I might ask a thousand people, and yet not get the right one."

Of course you might; but then, you might ask three, and the third might be the right one. Don't think because you simply move in a limited circle during your day's work that you're not likely to see the right man. All these men will intrude themselves unostentatiously into people's daily lives. They may converse with you on any subjects but those which will give you a hint regarding the ten pounds, unless you broach such subject yourself.

Don't think that you have to ask everyone you meet. Just show the page to a fellow passenger by boat or train, to a chance acquaintance on the beach or on the parade. No harm is done if he's not the right chap. You can both just laugh over it.

ONE THING IS CERTAIN.

The Two Hundred Pounds is wandering about the United Kingdom at this moment. Someone has got to get it. Why not you?

As each £10 has been asked for advertisements will be inserted in the newspapers published in the locality in which the claim has been made.

Every day the Ten Pounders will write to the Editor and tell their experiences—where they had breakfast, where they lunched, whom they sat next to, what those people were like, what they were talking about, and what they ate—in fact, will say just exactly what they have been doing every day. Some of this information will be published in the *Daily Express* every day and in *Pearson's Weekly* every week, so you will know just how things are going along.

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The Ruse that Failed.

"Now, Arthur," said Mrs. Barrington as her husband put three handbags on the seat beside her in the train and handed over her ticket, "I want you to be sure and write to me every day, and tell me everything you think, how much you miss me, and all about the way the servants get along—don't omit any of the details, thinking that I shall not be interested, for every word that you write, dear will be precious to me. Put plenty of local colour in your letters."

"Oh, I'll keep you posted," he replied. "You have a good time, and don't worry about me. I'll get along somehow. Of course, it'll be lonely and all that, but I'll manage to pass the time. It'll be rather dismal for me to sit in the garden alone when it begins to get dark, thinking of you in the gay crowd having a good time, and never giving a thought to——"

"Arthur," his pretty wife interrupted, "if you continue to talk that way I just shan't go. You know I shall think of you every minute I'm away, and if the doctor hadn't said the sea air would be good for me I wouldn't have thought of accepting Aunt Laura's invitation. Please don't fret me, love, will you? Remember that, wherever I may be, and no matter how gay my surroundings, I shall be thinking of you."

They threw kisses at each other as the train moved away. Then Barrington went to his office and began writing letters. They were to his wife. He wrote fourteen of them—enough to last for two weeks.

In general outline the letters w re about the same. He started each by filling a sheet with endearing words and declarations that he was very lonely without his darling. Then followed the local colour she wanted, in the form of comments on occurrences of the day in and about their home.

The letters were not dated, but he sealed and addressed them, and arranged them in a pile so that his lady clerk could take off the top one day after day and drop it into the letter box.

He had been gone nearly a week when there came a telegram for him.

Of course, telegrams had to be opened, and when Miss Wildreth, the lady clerk, read the message she turned pale.

"Why don't you answer my questions about the housemaid's ankle and your liver? Am awfully worried."

That was what Elizabeth Barrington had telegraphed.

After studying the matter for a while Miss Wildreth decided that it was necessary for her to act. She was clever enough to hold a position that not more than one man out of fifty could have filled, and she had the habit of keeping her eyes and ears open. Still, she said to herself:

"The housemaid's ankle? I can see how he might know something about his own liver, but—and why should his wife, of all people, want him to see about it? Well, if I ever get married——"

But instead of finishing what she had started to say, she wrote the following dispatch:

"Leg and liver O.K. Don't worry."

It was about ten o'clock the next day when another telegram for Arthur Barrington was received. It read: "Yesterday's letter contradicts telegram. Why are you deceiving me? Are you better to-day? Shall I come home?"

The lady clerk's reply was as follows:

"Am true as steel. Don't think of coming home."

Miss Wildreth had just begun to feel that she had succeeded in settling the disagreeable business when a messenger boy arrived with another telegram, in which her employer's wife said:

"Don't understand. What do you mean by being true as steel? Something tells me you are worse. Wire immediately."

The lady clerk replied:

"Never mind reference to steel. Am all right."

Mrs. Barrington watched eagerly for the postman on the following day, and when he handed her Arthur's letter she opened it with trembling fingers. Eagerly she scanned the first page and was about half through the local colour when she jumped up and ran to her aunt, crying:

"Merciful goodness, what can this mean? Three days ago Arthur wrote that the housemaid was 'still laid up with her lame ankle,' which I have tried in vain to get him to tell me about, and that he was not feeling well, and the doctor had told him his liver was out of order. Yet here in to-day's letter he tells me that the housemaid has just fallen downstairs spraining her ankle, and that he made himself a Welsh rarebit the night before last, and ate so much of it his liver is all upset. Why on earth did the housemaid fall downstairs when she had a sprained ankle, and what ever possessed Arthur to eat a Welsh rarebit when the doctor had just warned him about his liver?"

Her aunt was trying to work it out when Elizabeth Barrington happened to think of the telegram she had received the day before.

"This letter must have been written about the time they were sent," she said. "I'm going home. Something's wrong. Arthur's liver trouble has gone to his head. My poor darling has lost his reason. He writes a thing and then denies it by telegraph. By starting to-night I can be with him to-morrow morning. Oh, how shall I pass the weary hours?"

* * * * *

Miss Wildreth broke down and made a full confession when Mrs. Barrington rushed, wild-eyed and pale, into her husband's office. Then the two young women sat together in the private room and wept.

"If I hadn't accidentally knocked over the pile of letters he left to be posted," the lady clerk sobbed, "they would not have been mixed up; there would have been no reference to the spraining of the housemaid's ankle before it happened, and his liver would not have troubled him until after he ate the rarebit. How shall I ever be able to explain it to him?"

"You needn't try," Mrs. Barrington answered; "I'll explain to him when he comes home. Dear old fellow! I'm so glad he doesn't know anything about this. He mightn't be having a good time at all if he did."

F. P. James.

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The Brain Gymnasium

IN these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, September 10th, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 205.

WHAT three figures, multiplied by five, will give six?

No. 206.

EQUIVALENTS of the following represent three well-known places: A vessel, weight. To hurry, a fish. Wine, a man's name.

No. 207.

RE-ARRANGE the following letters so as to form a double word-square, the connecting word being an Irish town:

AAA BBB D EEEEEEE NNNNNN OOOOO T V WWWW.

No. 208.

I AM a fish; change my head and I am an article of food; take away one letter, and I am to fill. Change my head, I am a measure; behead me, I am an animal.

No. 209.

MY FIRST reversed is to my FIRST
A source of deadly rancour,
And yet without my FIRST reversed,
My FIRST will not weigh anchor.

My FIRST and LAST are both the same;
This fact no doubt will please you;
And yet this hardly can be so,
Because it means to tease you.

For WHOLE, just join my FIRST and LAST,
And you at once will get it;
And yet the moment it is caught
You will no doubt regret it.

No. 210.

MY whole is a Shakesperian quotation.
My 6, 17, 22, 18, 24, 19, is timid.
My 1, 10, 18, 7, 3, is portion.
My 20, 4, 22, 24, 5, 26, is truth.
My 25, 16, 8, is part of the body.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 187 to 192.

No. 187. "Time and tide wait for no man."

No. 188.
CIDER
INANE
DAGON
ENODE
RENEW

No. 189. Pheasant.

No. 190. BRIGHTON. TeRcel, BrOchure. Grip, HaNdy.

No. 191.
S yria A
H ero N
Y ach T
L ent O
SHYLOCK O nio N ANTONIO.
C ad I
K iot O

No. 192. Oil-lamp.

RESULT OF THE TRACING FACES COMPETITION.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. A. Grant, of Lowfields, Bracebridge, Lincoln, whose solution was the neatest.

A copy of "The Member's Wife," by Hon. Mrs. Henry Chetwynd, has been sent to each of the following:

Miss M. Cawood, 45 Newington Road, Edinburgh.
T. E. Bridge, 35 Loudoun Square, Cardiff.
M. Mackenzie, 42 Garfield Street, Bootle, Liverpool.
Mrs. Watts, "Kildare," Lower Edmonton.
Joshua Watts, "Kildare," Lower Edmonton.
S. Watts, "Kildare," Lower Edmonton.
W. Allan, 81 Vincent Street, Glasgow.
Miss Dexter, Millfield House, Upper Edmonton.
James Braidwood, 7 Sciennes, Edinburgh.
A. S. Hossell, Derby Haven, Castletown, Isle of Man.
George Scattergood, 209 Darlaston Road, Pleck, Walsall.

Owing to an error, the result of Puzzles 181 to 186 appeared under this heading last week.

SHORT STORIES ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
Double " " "	1 0 0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10 0 0
Half-page " " "	5 0 0
Quarter-page " "	2 10 0
Eighth-page " "	1 5 0
Front page, whole " "	12 10 0
" half	6 5 0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate. Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Sept. 4th, if intended for the issue on sale Sept. 18th, and dated September 22nd. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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£3,350 IN CASH PRIZES

FINAL CLOSING OF ALL COMPETITIONS.

No further advertisements of any will appear again. If you do not compete now you may lose £100 Cash. The offer will never be repeated.

In the first place make up the best sentence you can out of five words, each word commencing with a letter of **"CHINA."** Thus, for example: **"C**hinese **H**onour **I**s **N**ow **A**bhorrent." You can cut out and use the following form if you like.

Be sure and mark envelope, left-hand top corner, "Short Stories," and forward to A.B. Cycle Co. Limited, 59, 60, 67, 68 & 69 Chancery Lane, Holborn.

I*_____ of†_____

hereby declare that the sentence below is the only one I have sent in for this competition.

C	**H**	**I**
N	**A**	**Date of Posting.**

* State whether Mr., Mrs., or Miss. † Full address to ensure result reaching you.

Don't forget to enclose Two Penny Stamps.

Competition closes on Saturday, September 15th, 1900.

We will give you full details of the above cash prizes, in which there is nothing to pay for any prize, and where every competitor is a Cash Prize-Winner, when we send you the results of this Competition, in which for the best solution we offer:

A £23 A.B. CYCLE FREE,

AND FURTHER PRIZES OF

2nd Class Prizes ...	**£23 Cycle for £9**	**5th Class Prizes** ...	**£23 Cycle for £12**
3rd Class Prizes ...	**£23 Cycle for £10**	**6th Class Prizes** ...	**£23 Cycle for £13**
4th Class Prizes ...	**£23 Cycle for £11**	**Consolation Prizes** ...	**£23 Cycle for £14**

56 Cycles have been won Free of Cost.

FULL NAMES AND ADDRESSES CAN BE HAD ON APPLICATION.

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—Competition is NOW OPEN, and CLOSES on Saturday, September 15th, 1900.

Enclose two penny stamps for postage of Result of Competition. As so few are able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount paid for any prize if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. Results will be declared as soon as possible. Prizes unclaimed in a week or ten days are passed on to the next winner in rotation.

£100 **If you can purchase our cheapest machine, brand new, from us, or an agent, dealer, shipper, or factor can buy one for less than FIFTEEN SOVEREIGNS, we will promptly hand you a £100 BANK OF ENGLAND NOTE.**

Send your reply to the Managing Director, marking your envelope *Short Stories,*

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59, 60, 67, 68 & 69 CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

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You can discover it for yourselves.
Don't wait for your friends to remark on your yellow and sallow complexion.
Seek relief in time with a BOX-*ER* two of

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

BEECHAM'S PILLS are composed entirely of medicinal herbs, and are warranted free from mercury or other poisonous substance. They can harm no one, and may be given to children or to the aged and infirm with perfect safety. They cleanse the stomach and bowels, and purify the blood, invigorate the whole nervous system, and give tone and energy to the muscles. In the preparation of BEECHAM'S PILLS the most scrupulous care is taken, and the ingredients form the most successful combination that has ever been discovered.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.